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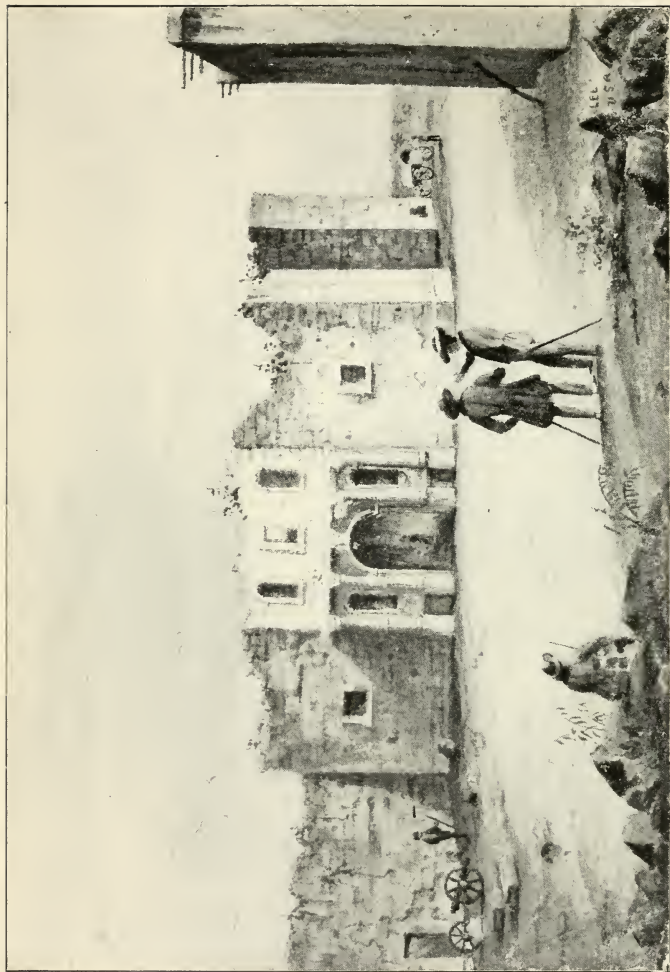
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BATHES





THE ALAMO, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

From a water-color drawing made by Captain Robert E. Lee, U.S.A., during his Mexican campaign

THE SON OF LIGHT HORSE HARRY

BY JAMES BARNES

AUTHOR OF

"FOR KING AND COUNTRY" "A LOYAL TRAITOR"

"NAVAL ACTIONS OF THE WAR OF 1812" ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

BY

W. E. MEARS



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THE SON OF LIGHT HORSE HARRY

THE LEES

BEFORE we go deeply into the story of the son of Light Horse Harry it might be well to tell, shortly, something of his family and of his ancestors. So let us begin at the beginning, with the first of the name of Lee who crossed the ocean to the shores of the New World.

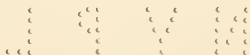
Colonel Richard Lee, one of the Shropshire Lees, of Moreton Regis, came from England to Virginia during the reign of Charles I. He settled in what was to be the beautiful county of Westmoreland, and there, in the almost unbroken wilderness, he cleared a wide tract of river-land on the banks of the Potomac, and built himself a fine country-house that he named Stratford, after a family estate in the elder

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country. Upon the surrounding plantations he gathered about him his dependants and servants.

Colonel Lee was a devoted loyalist and adherent of the Stuart cause. He took no heed of the fact that there was any interregnum, as the dating of his will in 1663 sufficiently proved, for this document begins: "The sixth of February, in the sixteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, Charles II., King of Great Britain, etc., and in the year of our Lord 1663." At that time the second Charles had been upon the throne but three short years.

Colonel Lee assisted Governor Berkeley in keeping the colony of Virginia loyal to the crown, and Cromwell was forced to send an expedition to reduce the colonists to subjection; and, strange to say, in the treaty that followed, Virginia was described as an "independent dominion." Richard Lee spent some time in England, and made three or four voyages between the shores of his old home and his adopted country. He died, leaving a large family, and his eldest son, John, dying a bachelor, his second son, Richard, after having received his educa-



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tion at Oxford, succeeded to the old homestead in Westmoreland. He was a member of the council of Virginia, and, crowned with years and honors, died in 1714, leaving five sons and one daughter. His eldest son, also named Richard, married in London and settled there, although subsequently his children returned to America.

Philip, the second son, removed to Maryland in 1700, and the Lee family of that State are descended from him. Francis, the third son, died a bachelor; but Thomas, the fourth, remained in Virginia, where he received what might be called a common-school education; but he was an apt scholar and a hard student, and became, despite his lack of university training, very proficient in Latin and Greek. Through his own endeavors and ability also he amassed a considerable fortune, and became so well known and respected that his name reached royal ears in London, and when the old Westmoreland house burned down Queen Caroline sent him a large sum of money out of her privy purse to assist in rebuilding his property.

Thomas succeeded Sir William Gooch as president and commander-in-chief of the colony,

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which position he held until the king regularly appointed him its governor. He died in 1750, and was buried only a few miles from Stratford, his old place, at Pope's Creek church, where, eighteen years before, George Washington had been baptized.

The great father of his country paid a tribute to the family at Stratford when, in 1771, he wrote the following words, "I know of no country that can produce a family all distinguished as clever men as our Lees." Thomas's granddaughter, Matilda, married her cousin, General Henry Lee, the "Light Horse Harry" of Revolutionary fame, whose father was Henry Lee, a son of Henry Lee, the fifth son of the second Richard. It is said Washington's affection for Harry, and his great admiration for the bold cavalryman's military gifts and dashing courage, were enhanced by the fact that he, Washington, was once supposed to have had a tender feeling for the young officer's mother, who, before her marriage, was the beautiful Lucy Grymes.

Light Horse Harry was born on January 29, 1756, passed his early life in Virginia, and was educated at Princeton. It was at first intended

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that he should take up the profession of the law, and also that he should go to England, as the sons of most wealthy planters did in those days, in order to follow out his course of study. But just as he was about to set sail the war broke out between the mother-country and the colonies. "The shot that was heard around the world" changed the direction of many thoughts and ambitions, and Henry Lee laid down his pen and his law-books and took up the sword, as hundreds of other young men did. At the age of nineteen he was nominated a captain of cavalry by Patrick Henry, and at the battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and Springfield, and in many of the smaller actions in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, he drew the attention of his superiors by his courage, ability, and constant activity. Congress early recognized his services, and before he was five-and-twenty he was promoted and given command of an independent corps. His capabilities were so highly valued by the commander-in-chief that on more than one occasion the latter sought him out in order to secure his advice and co-operation in affairs requiring not only dash and bravery but cool

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judgment and military forethought. For his part in the brilliant action that resulted in the capture of Paulus Hook, New Jersey, he was presented by Congress with a gold medal, a distinction bestowed on no other officer below the rank of general during the war. On the obverse of the medal appears his bust, and under it the words, "Henry Lee, Legionis Equit; Præfecto Comitia Americana," and on the reverse is translated: "Notwithstanding rivers and entrenchments, he, with a small band, conquered the foe by warlike skill and prowess and firmly bound by his humanity those whom he had conquered by his arms. In memory of the conflict at Paulus Hook, August 19, 1775."

In the latter part of 1780 he was given the title of lieutenant-colonel, and certain it is that the corps he commanded deserved the description then given to it as the finest that made its appearance on the arena of the Revolutionary War. It was composed of picked men from the cavalry and infantry, and both officers and privates were veterans whose metal had been tried.

General Nathanael Greene, who commanded in the South, where Lee's legion saw its active work,

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wrote to him as follows, "No man in the progress of the campaign had equal merit with yourself, nor was there one so reported; everybody knows I had the highest opinion of you as an officer, and you know I love you as a friend."

During a good part of the campaigning in the Southern department of the United States, Colonel Lee had opposed to him the renowned Colonel Tarleton, and it was the aim of his life to bring this resourceful and cold-blooded Englishman to book, and upon several occasions they were opposed to each other.

In Lee's account of his campaigns and actions there is a strange note of frankness and justness. He always wrote of himself in the third person, and criticised his own mistakes and errors where he thought they existed, as if he had had no personal interest in them. He also, in every case, gave his enemy credit where credit was due, and praise in many cases when apparently the feelings of the partisan might have swamped the judgment of the historian.

But it was not altogether for his military prowess that Henry Lee was distinguished. Shortly after the surrender of Cornwallis at

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Yorktown his military career was abandoned for a time and he took up the service of his State. He was a member of the convention that met in Virginia in the year 1778 to consider the ratification of the federal Constitution. In 1786 he was a delegate to the Continental Congress. For three years he was Governor of Virginia—from 1792 to 1795—and during all this time he possessed the close friendship of Washington, and enjoyed his confidence as few of those close to the great commander-in-chief enjoyed it. On the death of Washington he was appointed to deliver the address in commemoration of the great man's services, but owing to illness he did not deliver it in person. But one sentence of the oration as he wrote it, although often misquoted, has remained in the memory of every school-boy; and who has not heard the career and character of the father of his country epitomized in the immortal words, "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-citizens."

The influence of his ideas and convictions, of his duty towards his country, and his duty towards his State and commonwealth, doubtless

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bore fruits in the future action and decisions of his sons, for he wrote, in 1792, at the end of a letter replying to the offer of the command of an army to be destined for the protection of the Western frontier, these words, "No consideration on earth could induce me to act a part, however gratifying to me, which could be construed into disregard or faithlessness to this commonwealth."

Henry Lee was married twice, first, as we before stated, to his cousin Matilda, who bore him four children, two sons dying in infancy. After the death of his first wife General Lee married Annie Hill Carter, daughter of Carter, of Shirley, and four sons and two daughters, all but one of whom reached middle age and became renowned in their walks in life, were born at Stratford. The eldest son, Algernon Sydney, died when a little child; the names of the other sons, in order of their birth, are as follows: Charles Carter, Sydney Smith, and Robert Edward, who was born at the old homestead January 19, 1807. The daughters' names were Anne and Mildred. Charles studied law and was graduated from Cambridge with honors. Sydney entered the

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United States navy at the age of fourteen. He advanced rapidly, and when Commodore Perry made his famous voyage that opened up the mysterious land of the Mikado to the eye of the foreigner, and awoke the possibilities of the slumbering nation, Lee was in command of the commodore's flag-ship. Subsequently, he was appointed commandant of the naval academy, and then was placed in charge of the navy-yard at Philadelphia. In 1861 he was in Washington, and like his more distinguished younger brother, imbued with the almost fanatical love that the Lees held for their native State, he resigned his commission and declared for the Confederacy.

But despite the greatness of Henry Lee's services and the record of his duties well performed, it is the figure of his youngest son that comes before us as the great Lee when mention is made of the family name. In the heart of the Southerner his name occupies a place that no other name can ever occupy. But the pride in his military career belongs to the whole nation and to no single section of the country. People are familiar with the campaigns of the great general, the commander-in-chief of the army of

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the Confederacy, but of the time when Robert E. Lee was yet known as "the son of Light Horse Harry," when he was winning his spurs under the eyes of men who remembered his illustrious father, and when, as an officer still under middle age, he had gained no slight renown, little had been said. And so we come to the story which opens early in the year of 1812.

I

FATHER AND SONS

COLONEL HENRY LEE was walking up the main street of Alexandria. There was not a man, nor a woman, nor a child—nor negro slave, for that matter—who did not know him by sight. Although his figure had grown stouter since the days when as Light Horse Harry he had passed ten hours out of the twenty-four in the saddle, his eyes were bright, and in them, on occasions, shone flashes of the old-time fire. His ruddy cheeks glowed with health, and the fact that he was still fond of horseback riding was proved by the fact that he wore a heavy pair of buckskin riding-trousers and his top-boots, with silver spurs at the heels, were sprinkled with splashes from the muddy Virginia road.

Beside him walked two little boys, one nine years of age and the other a child of five or six.

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It was all the little one could do to keep pace with the father's quick, sturdy strides, but with head thrown back he plodded on manfully beside him.

Suddenly the colonel looked down.

"Going too fast for you, Robert, my son?" he asked.

"No, sir; I'll keep up with you," replied the boy, panting slightly.

A smile passed between them. The colonel, extending his hand to the little fellow, slowed his gait.

"I was thinking hard, my son," he said, "and I have noticed that when a person thinks hard he works hard, and walks hard."

"I do that myself sometimes," the elder boy put in, "and sometimes I get thinking so quick I have to run."

"And what are you thinking about then?" asked the father.

"What I want to do some day, sir."

"And what is that?"

"Oh, so many things, I couldn't tell you them all; but principally I think how I would like to be a sailor."

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"I want to be a soldier," panted the small one, suddenly.

The colonel laughed. "And what kind of a soldier, my son?"

"One like yourself, father," the boy replied, taking a fresh hold of one of the colonel's sturdy fingers.

They had reached the gateway of the fine old place that had come into the colonel's possession a short time before, and to which he had moved from the old family mansion of Stratford, in Westmoreland County, that had been associated for generations with the family name of Lee.

Standing at the entrance as they approached was a tall, spare man in a faded blue coat, a great, old-fashioned, three-cornered hat came down to his ears, and his gray hair was braided in a tightly wrapped queue that reached down to his thin shoulder-blades. Although at least seventy, the tall man's figure was very straight, and his light-blue eyes under his shaggy eyebrows gleamed brightly. As the colonel saw him the old man's hand flew to his forehead, and he stood stiff and rigid in the attitude of



" HE STOOD STIFF AND RIGID IN THE ATTITUDE OF SALUTE "



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salute. The colonel returned it, and then his face lit up.

"Powell, how are you?" he said, extending his hand cordially.

"Very well, colonel, for one of my years," was the reply. "I am pleased you remembered me, sir."

"I never forget the face of an old friend, Powell. And what brings you to this part of the country?"

"I came up to Washington to see about my pension. The old wound still troubles me at times. But now I hear there is going to be another war. I think I might still be fit for service."

"If there is anything I can do for you I'll do it, Powell; but I don't go to Washington very often now. I have some friends there, however."

It was true that just at this time the colonel was a little on the outs on some political question with the administration, and being a man who concealed neither his friendships nor his animosities, he cared little who knew it. Yet they intended making him a general in case of

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trouble with England, for the country was then on the border of the War of 1812. Perhaps the old soldier had heard something of the matter, for he thanked the colonel kindly and informed him that his only object in crossing the Potomac was to see his old commander once again and to ask if he could serve him.

"There are plenty of young men to do all the fighting, Powell," replied the colonel, "but if war should come—and I am afraid it will—if the old legion is ordered into service, I can promise you that we'll be together again."

"Thank you for speaking me so fair," replied the old man. "I can fling a leg over a horse's back, but I fear my sword-arm is not what it used to be, yet I'd rather be with you once again, riding after the redcoats, if I could, than to draw a general's pension."

"I'm sure you would, Powell, and my hand on that," returned the colonel, his eyes moistening.

With some embarrassment the old trooper took the extended hand.

Colonel Lee suddenly felt a pull at his coat-tail. He understood at once.

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"This is my son Sydney, Powell," he said. "And this is Robert, my youngest." Then to the boys, "Mr. Powell was with me—let's see, how many years was it?"

"From the beginning to the end of the war, colonel." Again the old man saluted.

As he fell in beside his old commander it was noticed that the man limped slightly.

"You were wounded at the Deep River, if I remember rightly," said the colonel.

"The first time, sir. Yes, and again the day of the affair with Colonel Pyle, sir. I suppose the young gentlemen have heard you tell of that often."

The boys said nothing. Many stories had their father told them, and they had pored over his written accounts and published memoirs by the hour. Sydney knew something of that to which the old soldier had referred, but he determined to hear the story once again and at first hand. So, late that afternoon, as they and their father were sitting together on the broad veranda of the old house, and the old soldier had left, Sydney opened the subject frankly.

"Tell me about Colonel Pyle and what Mr.

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Powell had to do with it, father," he requested.

The colonel, nothing loath, leaned back in his chair, and, as the elder nestled at his knee and Robert climbed to the shelter of his arms, he began this story:

"It was while I was pursuing my old enemy, Colonel Tarleton, that the incident occurred to which our friend Powell referred. Two or three times I had supposed that I had him safe, and every time he had escaped me. North Carolina, during the days of the Revolution, was much divided in its sentiments, as you know, and many hundreds of the country people were not only loyal in their sentiments to the British government, but served the crown in every way in their power. There were Tory bands that disbanded in one place to meet in another scattered all through the State, and Colonel Tarleton and the bold English cavalrymen never at any time lacked for guides who knew every inch of the country and every by-path of the wilderness.

"It was while I was crossing the Haw River, near Hillsboro, that I heard that Tarleton was in

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camp but four miles in front, and probably unaware of our position. Finding a countryman by the road-side whom one of the troopers recognized as a friend of liberty, we sent him on ahead to ascertain, if possible, the condition of the British camp and the position of the forces. In a very little time he returned with the information that Colonel Tarleton's men were resting by the road-side and only the usual pickets placed in the meadow where the horses were grazing. The colonel and his officers were in a farm-house some little distance from the road, and were at that moment breakfasting.

"Now, Tarleton at this time had more cavalry than we had, and in addition possessed two small field-pieces, while we had none of the latter. However, in infantry, including the militia who were then serving with us, we possessed probably a hundred men more than the British. With a great deal of care we advanced down the road for a mile or so and then deployed into the woods. Our progress was slow, however, and when we reached the meadow and the lane our game had flown. But riding up swiftly to the farm-house we succeeded in capturing two of

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Tarleton's officers. From them we learned that Colonel Tarleton must have called his command together just after our informant, the countryman, had started to return. I was so chagrined and disappointed at not getting hold of the man whom I had so much wanted to meet that I proposed to Colonel Pickens a plan that might bring us together. The uniform of the legion I commanded was very much like that of the British — a short green coat with red trimmings — and our men were very similar in appearance. Although it was very risky we decided to pass off the command as a British detachment following to join the main body on the road ahead. As soon as this was decided I rode out at the head of the cavalry and proceeded leisurely down the road, the two prisoners under charge of this same man Powell, who was then a sergeant, being warned not to disclose our character under penalty of death, for war often has to use extreme measures, as you know. Well, we had not gone far down the road when we met two mounted countrymen standing in the bushes. One of them rode out and, taking off his hat awkwardly, bowed and spoke to the officer who

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was riding about a hundred paces in front leading the vanguard.

“‘We have just come from Colonel Pyle, who is not far down the road, and we are looking for Colonel Tarleton’s camp, sir,’ he said.

“This Colonel Pyle, I might mention, was quite a wealthy man and loyal to the British crown. It had been rumored for a long time that he had been gathering the Tories of the immediate neighborhood, and he had come to be regarded by the Federalists as a dangerous person indeed. It was fortunate that the young officer to whom they spoke was both clever and quick-witted, for without a moment’s hesitation he turned to a man at his elbow, who had overheard what the countryman had said, and told him to ride back to the colonel with the information. He detained the young men for a minute or so, and then allowed them to ride back towards where I was standing at the head of the halted column. The dragoon to whom the message had been intrusted was no fool either, and he told me what had occurred and in such a manner that I was completely warned and could act accordingly. Before the two mes-

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sengers from Colonel Pyle had arrived within speaking distance, I sent back a message to Brigadier Pickens, requesting him to place his riflemen out of sight on the left flank in the thick woods. It was necessary to do this, for the militia were readily distinguished by the green twigs they wore in their hats, while the mounted men of the legion, as I told you before, resembled very much Tarleton's dragoons. The two prisoners we had taken at the house were also hurried to the rear. This was hardly done before the two countrymen had reached me, and the very first word that one of them said determined my course of action, for he addressed me by no other name than Colonel Tarleton. It was not the proper time to inform him of his mistake, and I let it pass.

"The other fellow, who was mounted on a fine gray horse, broke in now with a long account of the laudable spirit that had actuated Colonel Pyle in gathering together such a fine band of mounted men to help put down the rebels, and he expressed the hope that I would soon be able to capture that 'arch-traitor Lee.' I almost smiled when he spoke of me in this fashion, but

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I replied, thanking him for all his loyal sentiment and expressing much gratitude at the news that he had brought. Delay, however, was dangerous. Every minute counted now; we had to act quickly, so I determined upon a bold expedient. Sending one of the troopers back to the rear with orders for the column to close up and keep well together, I requested the young man who had first spoken to ride ahead with one of my officers, the same one that had had charge of the vanguard, and to request Colonel Pyle, with Colonel Tarleton's compliments, to draw his men up by the side of the road and allow me to pass by, as my troops and horses were tired and we wished to get into camp immediately. What puzzled me was that they had missed meeting the real Tarleton, who was not above an hour ahead of us on the road. The reason, however, I soon saw, for Colonel Pyle's company had ridden into the highway from a lumber road and across some newly broken country. It was just by luck that his messenger had gone south instead of north, and he could not have missed seeing Tarleton's rear-guard by more than a few minutes at least. My officer and Colonel Pyle's

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young trooper had galloped ahead out of sight. The man on the gray horse I kept with me, and he talked on incessantly in praise of Colonel Pyle, and was insistent in expressing hopes that the rebels would soon be dancing at the end of a rope, or, as he suggested, be sent to sea in leaky ships and sunk, as the quickest way to get rid of them. He adapted his conversation to the supposed character of the man he was addressing, but I never saw a mild-eyed youth indulge in such blood-thirsty rhetoric.

“Turning in my saddle I looked back and saw that my men were following quietly and in good order, but I noticed that they had drawn their sabres and were carrying them as if ready to make a passing salute. A turn in the road brought us in sight of a long line of mounted men forming, as I had suggested, with their left to the advancing column, which, of course, meant that I would find Colonel Pyle at the farther end—that is, on the right.

“There was an added danger, perhaps, in that my men had to pass the whole length of the Tory line, and yet it gave me an advantage from the fact that, should any treachery or surprise take

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place, we would be in a better position to meet it. I had not the slightest idea whether Colonel Pyle knew Colonel Tarleton by sight, the garrulous countrymen by my side not being able to give me the information. It was my intention, however, upon getting an opportunity, to speak to the Tory leader, to make known our real character at once and give him my solemn assurance that he and his followers would be exempt from all harm if they would put down their arms and return to their respective homes. I also intended to give him an opportunity for a more generous action, and urge him to throw in his lot with us instead of with those who were then the enemies of our country and of liberty.

“I soon saw my officer returning, and, as I halted the column for a moment I was delighted at the news he brought, for it was reassuring and showed that Colonel Pyle suspected nothing. It was a trying moment when we rode by the first line of young men on their shaggy, unkempt farm-horses. I kept talking to my guide and looking out at the Tories as I passed by. They were much like our militia in appearance, and, in fact, were in some cases friends and neigh-

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bors. They were armed with rifles, muskets, and not a few with fowling-pieces, but they were a sturdy lot, and it was a nervous moment for me when the head of the column drew past the flank. Every foot, of course, that we progressed increased the chances of success. My men had been cautioned not to speak, and with set faces and a stiff attitude of regular dragoons, their sword-hilts at their hips, they rode on.

“I saw a man sitting on a big brown horse in the middle of the road to the right of the line, and my guide informed me that it was Colonel Pyle. He urged his horse a few steps forward on a walk, and, leaning with his hand outstretched, began to speak. What he said I could not clearly make out, but I knew that he addressed me as Colonel Tarleton. It was on my lips to stop him, when suddenly there came two shots from down on the left of the line, followed by four or five others, some quite near to us, and then a great shout. We had been discovered! Without any order being given by me, and by none from the officers with me, the line of troopers whirled and attacked Pyle’s men, who were almost at sword’s-point distance. One of the

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latter made a stroke at me with the butt of his rifle. Had not our friend Powell who was just here parried the blow and received part of the force of it on his shoulder, I should not have been here, my son.

“There was cutting and slashing up and down the line, and not a few shots exchanged at close quarters, but in the main the Tories had been taken by surprise, and it was but a one-sided fight. In the mean time, Tarleton, hearing the noise, had moved on quickly and escaped across the river. It was the second time that he had slipped through my fingers in twenty-four hours.”

As the boys listened to the story the elder concealed with some difficulty his excitement, and when his father had finished he said nothing for a few minutes, then he grasped his father's hand.

“I'm glad you told me that story, sir,” he said, quietly.

“Why, especially, my son?” asked the colonel.

“Because I wished to know the truth about it all.”

The colonel put his hand upon his son's head and laughed.

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Here little Robert spoke. "I don't like stories that are not true ones," he said, looking up into his father's face.

"I think you always want to know the truth about everything, my boy," replied the colonel. "It is sometimes hard to tell it when you hear it, and sometimes hard to tell it when you have to speak it. But there used to be an adage in our family that should always hold true—'Lees never lie!'"

As long as he could remember, from the time his youngest son was a prattling little child of three, the colonel had never received else than a straightforward answer to a question. The old adage of the family seemed born in the boy's very fibre. Even at the age of six he had a grave, quiet way about him. Colonel Lee looked down with a glance of pride and affection at the boy's thoughtful face.

However, as it was growing dark, the father and his sons arose and entered the house. The boys stopped at the window and stood there alone. Sydney was glad his father had told him the story, because not long before he had heard a different version of it told at the house of one

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of the neighbors, a man who had been known to have had British sympathies during the Revolution. And although no names had been mentioned, and he did not know altogether how much his father had to do with it, he resented the tale of Colonel Pyle's having been decoyed into a bad position and his men massacred in cold blood. He knew what to say now if the subject was ever brought up again.

As for Robert, child though he was, he never forgot his father's words.

II

THE SEPARATION

A FEW days after the scenes of the last chapter General Lee—for he had now received his commission—said good-bye to his family and set out for Baltimore, where he expected to be gone for a few days on business of an important nature that had to be completed before his departure to the North, where he expected to assume his military command. They were stormy days then, for, strange to say, the country, with a war on its hands, was not united in sentiment. There were many prominent people in New England, and not a few in the South, who had been against any action that might precipitate hostilities and bring on a war. Even after the first gun had been fired there were found men who urged quite publicly that the end of the struggle would be disastrous to the republic, and that conciliation and acceptance of the conditions

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offered by England were the only ways to prevent dire disaster.

With Henry Lee the matter was one of much debate. The acts of the administration at Washington did not altogether meet with his approval, and in his frank and open manner he expressed his opinion and was consequently quoted — and more often misquoted — in the press.

Now, there lived in Baltimore just at this time a Mr. Hanson, editor of the *Federal Republican*, a paper devoted to the interests of the Federalist party that was then not high in public favor. Party hatred was rife everywhere, and at no time in the history of our country was political feeling so bitterly avowed and so openly shown.

General Lee was a friend of Mr. Hanson, and on the day that he made his visit to Baltimore the *Republican* had printed an article that had created much excitement. In fact, so much of a stir was made by its appearance that the printing-office had been surrounded by a crowd of angry men since mid-day. It was three or four o'clock when General Lee arrived. He found some difficulty in working his way through the

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crowd, and he overheard many bitter speeches and excited words. But that the gathering would indulge in violence was far, indeed, from his mind.

When at last he reached the editor's office he found Mr. Hanson correcting the proof-sheets of an article that had just been set in type. The editor rose as his visitor entered.

"You are the very person I want to see, General Lee," he began. "Will you cast your eye over this and tell me what you think of it?"

Lee did as he was asked, the editor watching him narrowly and noting every change in his expression. When he had finished, the old soldier placed the paper on the desk and shook his head slowly. In a few words he advised his friend against the publication of the editorial. He cautioned him that it would not only produce a bad effect, but that it might inflame the people so that they would possibly fulfil some of the muttered threats.

But the editor was not to be reasoned with, or at least he would not alter his mind, and the article was embodied in the paper and some advance sheets reached the street. No sooner had

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the people outside secured a copy than it was read aloud, and before long half a dozen fiery orators were holding their little knots of listeners about them and pointing up at the office of the *Federal Republican*.

General Lee walked to the window; he had stayed late, intending to escort Mr. Hanson through the mob that had now increased in numbers and was growing angrier each moment. As he stood there the editor joined him. That Mr. Hanson was a man of strong convictions he had already proved, and that he possessed courage was evident. The general looked at him almost with admiration, for no sooner had the people in the street recognized him than there arose a great shout. The editor threw up the window and calmly gazed down at the howling mob. Whether it was his intention to address them or not cannot be told, for just at that moment one of the leaders headed a rush for the entrance (the office was on the second floor). Roughly sweeping aside one of the compositors, who had been acting as watchman, they started for the narrow stairway. General Lee rushed out into the hall to meet the onslaught. It was

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his intention to stop them if possible, and get them to listen to reason, but he did not know that a great many of the mob were under the influence of liquor, that had been doled out by a Whig wine merchant at the corner, a great enemy of Mr. Hanson. However, happen as it did, the whole combination of circumstances was most unfortunate.

General Lee possessed a fiery temper, and, as he had often proved, it had at times in the past got the better of him. He was a powerful man, well knit, and well muscled. The first fellow up the staircase was a large, hard-featured individual who carried a copy of the *Federal Republican* in his hand. General Lee met him, and with his palm peacefully raised would have stopped him at the stairhead, but the fellow drew back and hurled the paper straight in the general's face.

There was no thought of anything but immediate action after that. Without a moment's hesitation Lee leaped at the leader's throat and hurled him down the stairway upon the heads of his followers. Then for an instant his wisdom and caution came to his aid, and he tried to make his voice heard. It was of no use; the ap-

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pearance of Mr. Hanson at his elbow, and the voice of the big bully who had now regained his feet, combined with the drunken condition of some of the crowd, accounted for what followed. Some one aimed a blow at the editor. It was parried and returned, and the first thing the general knew he was in the midst of a struggling, cursing throng that bore him down. Twice he managed to get erect again and fought bravely with his fists, but it was of no use. He was borne down again and trampled on.

When later he recovered he was in a terribly mauled and maimed condition. The editor also was badly hurt, and part of the office was wrecked.

For some time General Lee's life was despaired of. He had been injured internally, and long did the two boys, who were then at Alexandria, remember the sad day of their father's return. His military career was closed. He never could recover from those terrible injuries. It was shocking to his family and friends to see the difference in the old soldier's looks and behavior. There were no more rides 'cross country, no more long rambles along the banks of the river.

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Light Horse Harry had disappeared; it was a helpless invalid now who sat in the big chair on the wide veranda.

At last, under the advice of physicians, General Lee started on a voyage to the West Indies, where it was hoped that a long residence in a warm and equable climate would help to put off the acute stage of the ailment that had developed as a result of his meeting with the mob. Alas! he was never to see Alexandria again. Five miserable years of suffering he passed away from his native land, and in 1818 he found, to put it in his own words, "that he was approaching the Valley of the Shadow," and that his one desire was to end his days at home. So he set sail upon a little coasting-schooner bound from Nassau, and when only a day or so at sea his painful malady had so increased that he could no longer stand the pitching and tossing of the vessel, and he requested the captain to lay his course to Cumberland Island, off the coast of Georgia. His former friend and commander, General Nathanael Greene, had an estate there, and Mrs. James Shaw, his married daughter, lived in the beautiful old mansion of Dungeness. The

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schooner dropped anchor off the island, and with some difficulty General Lee was conveyed to land, where he was welcomed gladly; and here, surrounded by loving friends and all the comfort that their kindness and attention could give him, Henry Lee passed away, only two months after he had set sail for home.

Side by side the two comrades sleep, for he was buried close to the grave of General Greene. The letters that he had written to his wife and to his sons show well the temper and character of the man. Of his youngest son, Robert, he wrote as follows: "Robert was always good, and will be confirmed in his happy turn of mind by his ever-watchful and affectionate mother." It was the devotion of his young life and the deep affection that was so lovingly returned that probably helped to mould, in the boy's character, that sympathy and tender solicitude for his own family that always marked him.

When General Henry Lee died Robert was eleven years old. Mrs. Lee, up to that time, had been his tutor, besides being his guide, counsellor, and friend. But at the age of thirteen the boy began to study under the direction of Mr.

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Leary, a man of great scholarly attainments. Subsequently he attended a Quaker school, kept by Mr. Benjamin Hallowell, where he led his classmates in all their studies. He longed, however, to be supporting himself, and, although he said little about it, the career of a soldier still appealed to him as strongly as it had in the days of very early boyhood.

III

OFF TO WEST POINT

IT was a beautiful morning in the early spring. Out in the blue waters of the Potomac long lines of wild fowl, swans, geese, and ducks floated in the current. The twigs of the willow-trees were tipped with little furry points. The river-sedges were turning from gray to green.

A young man of eighteen and a slender girl, some two years younger, were walking down a path that led from the meadow to a little boat-landing at the water's edge. Many times they had made this short pilgrimage together, for Robert Lee had always been a welcome guest at Arlington, the great white house that stood back in the shadow of the ancient oaks. Since they were children Mary Custis, to whom all these broad acres would some day belong, and the "son of Light Horse Harry" had been friends. People had smiled when they had seen them,

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and even the colored servitors of the house had grown to accept the state of things as foreordained. As old Micah, Mr. Custis's body-servant, had remarked, "De seem jes made foh wun anuther." And there was between them that frank interchange of feeling, that essence of companionship, that makes all childish loves so sweet to witness.

When they reached the landing-place the girl seated herself on the edge of a skiff that had been hauled out of the water, and, pointing out to midstream, spoke thoughtfully:

"They will soon be leaving us," she said, "and going north. I wonder why they don't stay here all the year round?"

The young man looked out, following the direction of her pointing finger, and watched a long line of white swans that were hallooing and calling like children at recess. And as he watched there was a flutter in the sunlight like the waft of a great white pennant above the surface, and the line rose, sweeping into the air; still calling joyfully and swinging to the north, the great birds disappeared in the blue of the sky.

"And you will soon be going, too," said the

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girl, turning to the young man who had seated himself beside her.

"But not exactly like that," was the reply. "It will be in a jolting old coach, with miles of muddy road before me. That is," he added, "if I get my appointment."

"Oh, you'll get that certainly, from what I hear," laughed the girl, "and you'll be right glad to leave us. My father told me that General Jackson spoke very well of you."

"I shall be glad to go," said the young man, gravely, turning his dark eyes to the half-laughing face beside him. "Do you know, I remember a day when I was a little boy while my father was alive, a day when I made up my mind what I was going to be, and nothing yet has altered it."

"You know Mr. Leary always said that you should have been a parson." As she spoke Mary Custis looked at her companion roguishly. "Stand up," she said, "I want to look at you. No, really, I mean it," she added, as the young man did not comply.

And then, without any blushing or awkwardness, he rose and stood before her. There was a

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slight gleam of merriment in his eye as he leaned himself to her mood.

"Yes," she continued, observing him critically, "you'd look quite well in uniform, much better than in cassock and bands, I am sure. Must every soldier swear and stamp around the way Major Shirley does? I wouldn't like to hear you swear, but I should like to see you stamp a little. Try it," she said, gayly. "No one is looking, and I'll promise not to tell."

The stamp that followed almost shattered the plank of the flimsy little landing, and the laughter that rang out drew the attention of a tall, fine-looking man who was riding up the lane on a clean-limbed roan saddle-horse, and he shouted to them as he waved his hand:

"Ho, Robert!" he called. "There's news for you at the house. Your brother Sydney has just arrived. He has a letter for you."

"The appointment!" cried Mary Custis. "Come, let's run." She extended her hand with a childish invitation.

Robert Lee took it, held it an instant, and dropped it.

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"Now, you're angry," said the girl, "because I asked you to stamp."

The young man looked at her gravely and shook his head and smiled. "I'm terribly angry," he replied, with a twinkle in his dark eyes. And then quietly, with his companion walking by his side, they went up the pathway to the lane where the tall man on the horse waited for them. Often it had been Mary's endeavor to break down the dignity of her playmate, for ever since she could remember he possessed a grave, quiet way that, while not obtrusive, made her feel that he was almost as old at times, and surely as wise, as her father, who sat there stroking the roan mare's arching neck.

"The letter comes from Washington, young man," said Mr. Custis, bending from the saddle and taking Robert's extended hand. "I told you we would not fail."

"When will he have to go, father?" asked Mary, placing her hand on Robert's arm, much as a sister might have done to an older brother.

The old man looked down on them both affectionately. Like all the neighbors and all the old darkies, he had long ago watched gladly the

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trend affairs were taking. And looking into the future it gladdened his heart to see the vista of happiness spreading out for his only surviving daughter. He had long looked upon Robert as a man might look upon his son.

It was true; the message brought from Alexandria, only eight miles away, by the young midshipman Sydney, conveyed the information of Robert Edward's appointment as a cadet to the Military Academy at West Point. It contained orders also for him to report at West Point on the Hudson, and he must leave at once.

Sydney Lee showed more outward signs of gratification than did his grave-faced younger brother. The two boys were alike in some things and very different in others. Each in his own way held the peculiar attraction of the Lees. They were gifted with that hard-to-define personality that is the inheritance of some great families—the brow-mark of a ruling race.

That evening, before the two young men started on their long drive back to Alexandria in the high, two-wheeled chaise, Mary Custis got an opportunity to speak to Robert alone.

“You'll be coming back very often, won't

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you?" she asked, and, strange to say, her voice and manner showed a shyness that was new to her. "You'll be back here in the fall?"

"I'm afraid not, Mary," replied Robert, as he took her hand.

"The swans will be here again," she answered.

"If I were like the swans and could fly as fast as they I'd come back every week." Again he smiled gravely as he spoke, but his brother called to him, so, bidding a quick farewell, he jumped into the chaise.

That evening, at dinner, Mr. Custis spoke to a guest who was at the table. "Young Lee will make a fine soldier," he said. Mary started suddenly.

"Oh, father," she asked, earnestly, "you don't think there will ever be another war?"

"No one can tell, my dear; but that's what soldiers are for," replied the father. "I mean, to fight our battles for us."

"Then, if there is, I wish he had been a parson," said the girl.

Mr. Custis pinched her cheek. "You'll get over all that," he said. "You'll send him off with your ribbon on his arm."

IV

AT THE ACADEMY

BENDING over a drawing-board in one of the class-rooms, the windows of which looked out on the spreading green of the parade-ground, a young cadet was working with ruler and pencil. So interested was he that he did not notice that the instructor had paused behind him and was looking over his shoulder at his work.

"Very good, Mr. Lee," said the officer; "you have a decided bent for drawing, and should be in the Engineers."

The tall young man straightened himself.

"It is the work I like most, sir."

"Keep at it, then." And as he said these words Mr. Gimbrede, the instructor, passed on and the cadet went back to his drawing-board.

It was Robert E. Lee's second year at West Point. Already he had attracted the attention

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of his superiors and instructors by his purposeful energy. So far he had been at the head of his class and not a single demerit appeared against his name. Yet, despite the fact of his being so hard a student, he had lost nothing in popularity with his classmates. He had no intimates, and kept his own counsel, yet many a younger cadet had come to him for advice and help. Discipline was strict in those days, and yet, of course, there were many boyish pranks and escapades indulged in at the Point whose records have not come down to history. But Robert Lee had held aloof from all foolishness. Purpose governed him, and it was only in his letters that went south to Alexandria and to Arlington that he showed that he was getting anything more out of the academy than a record for indefatigable industry and application. But his letters were filled with scraps of information and gossip, clever little sketches of West Point characters, and not a few cartoons of his friends and, perhaps, of the instructors. The remark of the officer who had charge of the drawing-classes had carried with it not only a promise but a prophecy. It was Robert's full intention to be-

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come an engineer, and, barring accidents, he well knew that the prize was in his grasp, for the cadets who graduate with honor are generally assigned to this coveted branch of the service.

But to return to the dim class-room. It was growing late, the sun had already disappeared behind the great wooded hills that tower above the little plateau, and at last the young man laid aside his ruler and placed the drawing-board in the corner. As he stepped from the building into the open air a slight figure, dressed in the tight bell-button coat—that is, the same as the cadets wear to-day—came up to him.

“Lee,” said a high-pitched voice, “you were at the riding-school this morning; did you notice anything that took place?”

“I heard there were some words between you and the man who rode next to you, but I paid little attention.”

“Exactly,” the young cadet replied. “It has been going on for some time, but now we have come to the end of matters. He wants me to fight him. There is no use of beating about the bush. You are from my State; I have come to ask you to be my second.”

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Lee paused and looked his classmate full in the face.

"You know my sentiments about this sort of thing here."

"Yes," replied the other, "I have heard of them."

"And yet you ask me to second you."

"I do, and what is your answer?"

Things were very different in those days, for the duel had not been abolished altogether from the code of social and military life. Even at the academy, meetings had taken place between young men yet in their teens, and officers of high rank had faced one another with the like-to-kill in their eyes over some slight quarrel and angry speech, and even such great men as General Jackson and General Scott, at that time the two leading soldiers of the country, had been with difficulty kept from shooting at each other, and public sentiment was not strong enough to overcome the dictates of the code. To refuse to fight carried with it no small disgrace. To refuse to be second was a great breach of friendship. Lee had more than once expressed himself as being against the duel. He was of a deeply re-

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ligious nature, and his convictions upon most matters were to him as part of his faith. "Tell me," he said to his friend, "quickly as you can, the history of this trouble."

Without preamble the boy began.

It was the usual story of such quarrels—a slight misunderstanding followed by a studied coldness, and then an act of open hostility that, coming after a series of fancied slights and wrongs, had terminated in the hot words spoken at the end of the day's drill.

Lee listened patiently until the young cadet had finished. Then he spoke quietly and with that peculiar decision that always marked him when he had weighed his thoughts and put them into words, for he possessed, for a soldier, a strangely judicial mind.

"No," he said, "I will not be your second; but let me tell you this: you both are wrong, and"—mentioning the other cadet's name—"he shall apologize. Are you willing to accept it?"

"Certainly," replied the boy; "but so-and-so will not give in. You know his reputation."

That night before taps were sounded Lee had found opportunity to talk with the challenger,

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a fiery-tempered young Southerner who afterwards became a general and was known for his dashing impetuosity. To his surprise, his peaceful overtures were not well received, and Lee was considerably disheartened. He found no opportunity to report his unsucccess, and he disliked intensely the idea of having to acknowledge his failure. Besides, it rankled him that he should not have been able to respond to a request that generally, in those days, was acceded to at once. Still, he had moral courage enough to stand by his word, despite the consequences. He tossed a great deal that night as he thought matters over, and he took little comfort in the thought that he had done his best. The next morning, as the cadets marched to mess-hall, he noticed the two young men standing near together as the line broke up to go to the tables. They were back to back. Lee passed quite close to them. Whether it was a sudden inspiration or not it can never be told, but as he paused for just a second at their side he said two words, "Shake hands."

The young fellow who the day before had disdained all offers of compromise turned, in a half-

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startled way. Before he had realized probably what he was doing the elder extended his hand; the other lad took it. Then, with the rattle of the wooden chairs, they sat down back to back. The same afternoon Lee met his friend who had asked him to be his second. They strolled up towards the battery together.

"Well," said the younger man at last, "it's settled."

"I hope so," Lee replied.

"But yet one thing," went on his companion. "Will you tell me how you did it?"

Lee's dark brows contracted, a puzzled expression came into his brown eyes. "I don't know," he said. "That is, I couldn't tell you if I tried."

And, to tell the truth, he never analyzed for himself the peculiar effect his personality had upon those with whom he was thrown in close association. It was not his power of argument, for in argument he indulged but little. It was the gift of impressing his earnestness upon others and the unconscious insistence of his beliefs in what was right and wrong. It is from the example set by men that lessons are most surely taught.



"AS HE FACED HIS BATTALION THERE WAS NO STRAIGHTER BACK
OR BETTER FIGURE"

3



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Time went on. The days were spent in the routine life of work of brain and body that composes the early existence of the would-be soldier. There was little play for the cadets in those days. Their exercise were drills or rides out into the country. There was little time devoted to sport or recreation, and holidays, in the sense that we understand them, were unknown. Many times did the young cadet think of the long afternoons along the banks of the Potomac, and when on some occasions he used to see the wild geese winging their V-shaped flight southward in the fall, he longed for wings to take him there also, and he remembered the time, almost three years before, when he had stood with Mary Custis and expressed this thought out loud. But he had little time for dreaming. He had gone through, without a break, the successive line of promotion; he never yet had been reported for tardiness or lack of neatness, and there appeared not a single demerit as yet against his name. No one was surprised when he received the honor of being appointed cadet-adjutant in his fourth year, the highest post of honor that the future officer can look forward to during the

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years of his undergraduate life. As he faced his battalion there was no straighter back or better figure than his among the two hundred.

Lee's class, which was graduated in 1829, numbered forty-six, and in the ranking of graduation he stood second. The "star" men as they stood in order, were: Charles Mason, New York; Robert E. Lee, Virginia; William H. Harford, Georgia; Joseph A. Smith, Pennsylvania; James Barnes, Massachusetts. Immediately Lee received his appointment as second-lieutenant in the Engineer Corps of the United States army. Only once had he been home on furlough from the Military Academy in the four years, but now he was given the usual freedom, and he hastened home at once. It was a sad home-coming, for his mother, so long an invalid, was failing rapidly. Only a short time after he had reached Alexandria she passed away, but happy in the pride she held in her sons, and proud of the reward that had come to her (the result, in a great measure, of her teachings), the knowledge of the honorable positions they had taken in the world.

Robert passed a good deal of his time at Arlington. He had found Mary Custis changed a

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little in appearance, and certainly when she had first seen him in his uniform it was more than admiration that shone in her eyes. When he left for the North it was understood that they were engaged to be married, although no announcement was then made to that effect. Mary's father, G. W. P. Custis, was the grandson of Mrs. Washington, and the adopted son of the great general. She was the heiress, as we have said before, of the estates of her father, and perhaps, at that time, the wealthiest unmarried woman in Virginia; but had she not had a penny to her name the attraction would have been the same for the young soldier, and with her beauty and his grace and charm they were said to be the handsomest couple that had ever stood together in the ballroom, or sat beside each other at the long table in the dining-hall at Arlington.

V

THE ENGINEER OFFICER

LIEUTENANT LEE, at the end of his furlough, was sent to Hampton Roads, Virginia, to assist in carrying on the completion of the extensive fortifications intended for the defence of the Chesapeake. His hard work in his preparatory courses stood him well when it came to facing the sterner curriculum of the school of life. He had ambitions, plenty of them, but the chief one was not so much to demand the approbation of his superiors as to gain, so far as he could, the satisfaction of feeling that he was doing his best at all times. And if genius is "the capacity for taking infinite pains," Robert E. Lee began to show that he possessed this gift at a very early age. Whether upon the bastions, directing the actual work of construction, or poring over the drawings and plans in the office, he brought what was best in him to the task be-

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fore him. His motto might have been said to be the same as that of the great commander under whom he subsequently served, General Winfield Scott: "Nothing is too small to be despised if it counts in the summing-up of one's duties.

For two years his life was uneventful. Hard work, constant application, good health, and hope spell happiness to any man, and with all these Lieutenant Lee was happy. Of course, he was looking forward to one great day, the day when he should call Mary Custis his wife, and at last, like the good things promised to those who work and wait, the day arrived.

It was June 30, 1831, when neighbors and friends gathered at Arlington to witness the wedding. The fine old place never looked more beautiful. As his nephew, General Fitzhugh Lee, described it, quoting in part his own description: "Old Arlington was in all her glory that night. The stately mansion never held a happier assemblage. Its broad portico and wide-spread wings held out open arms, as it were, to welcome the coming guests. Its simple Doric columns graced domestic comfort with a classic air. Its halls and chambers were adorned with

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portraits of the patriots and heroes and with illustrations and relics of the great Revolution and of the 'Father of his Country,' and, without and within, history and tradition seemed to breathe their legends upon a canvas as soft as a dream of peace."

The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Mr. Keith, and it is not hard to imagine the picture of the beautiful young bride and the handsome, stalwart young officer of the Engineers standing there as they plighted their troth.

There were gay times that night down in the negro quarters, for the Custises, like the Lees, treated their slaves not like slaves at all, but as if they were wards left to them by fate or the force of circumstances. They neither sold nor bought any of them, and a happier lot of blacks never lived, if the truth be told. Micah, who remembered days long before the Revolution, and who had cooked many times for Washington in the field, played the fiddle until early morning. Powell, the old soldier, had made another pilgrimage from his backwoods home in order to attend the marriage of the son of his old commander, and many other veterans of the

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Revolution, also, and younger soldiers in the uniforms they had worn in 1812, were there.

After a short honeymoon, which was principally spent at Arlington, Lieutenant Lee and his wife returned once more to Hampton Roads, where he took up again his work on the harbor defences. And, as some one has put it in reference to this part of his career, "little did he think that he would soon be studying, twenty-seven years afterwards, how to demolish them."

For four years he pursued his work and lived happily among his friends and neighbors, mostly military men, and then he was ordered to Washington in 1834, and received the appointment of assistant to the chief-engineer of the army.

It was rather an agreeable change, for now he was but a few miles from his old home, and Mrs. Lee was back among her old associates and friends. Once more there were long rambles by the river and long gallops across the country. Robert Lee was a splendid horseman. No one knew better than he did a good horse when he saw one, and no one looked better in the saddle.

There is a little anecdote told of him while he was in Washington which proves that sometimes

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he could unbend from his dignity, and that he was not above doing things that are generally supposed to go with a more madcap disposition.

He had come from attending a meeting at the house of the chief-engineer, and was about to mount his horse that had been held while waiting for him by a boy in the road, when Captain Macomb stepped up to him.

"It's a fine horse you've got there, Lee," he said, looking at the well-groomed black steed.

"You can have a ride on him any time you like, captain," Lee rejoined.

"Well, you might lend him to me now," said the captain, laughing. "I'm going a short way out in your direction."

Lee's foot was already in the stirrup, and he swung himself into the saddle. "I'll tell you what we'll do," he said, as he gathered up the reins—"we'll both ride him. He's strong enough to carry two. Get up behind."

A few minutes later people passing along the road were surprised to see two officers in uniform astride the same horse, jogging along as if it was nothing out of the ordinary. On Lee's face was not the shadow of a smile, even when he passed by

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and bowed politely to a party of cabinet officers as they passed the gate of the President's house. A little farther along, however, he touched the big black with his spurs, and Captain Maccomb, clinging around his waist and with both of them in roars of laughter, they made a John Gilpin run of it for a mile or so until Captain Maccomb slid off at the side of the road.

In his own home Lee could be as merry as the next one upon occasion, and the rarest of these times were when he was visited by either of his brothers. Charles Carter Lee, the eldest, who had been graduated from Cambridge, always lent an atmosphere of merriment and enjoyment to any gathering at which he might be present, and between the brothers there existed the most loving intimacy and companionship. General Fitzhugh Lee gives a little sketch of Charles Carter that presents him picturesquely before us:

"His social qualities were of the highest order, his humor inimitable; his classic wit flowed, as clear as the mountain-stream, from a well-stored mind. He was a boon companion and the first guest invited to the banquet; around him all clustered, and from his vicinity peals of laugh-

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ter always resounded. His speeches, songs, and stories are marked traditions in the family to-day. Gifted with a most retentive memory, and being a great reader, especially of history, his recollection of all he had read made him a most instructive and agreeable companion. Every subject received its best treatment from his genius. He was thoroughly conversant with Biblical literature, and had been known to maintain the leading part in discussions of the Bible with a roomful of ministers whose duty it was to expound it. In every drawing-room his presence was most warmly welcomed. At every festive board his song or speech was hailed with enthusiastic greeting. He was clever, generous, liberal, and free-hearted. When paying visits with his brothers—and the three often went together—should wine happen to be offered, Smith and Robert, with their usual abstemiousness, would decline; Carter, however, would accept, remarking, ‘I have always told these boys that I would drink their share of wine, provided they would keep me generously supplied.’ He wrote, too, with beauty and fluency of expression, and once said to his brother Robert: ‘The govern-

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ment employs you to do its fighting; it should engage me to write your reports. I admit your superiority in the exercise of the sword and in planning campaigns. I am, however, as you know, the better writer of the two, and can make my pen mightier than your sword after the battle is over. We could thus combine and be irresistible.'"

But the life of the soldier who serves his country, even in times of peace, is liable to sudden changes of residence. He may be, without warning, ordered from a comfortable home and pleasing surroundings to precarious work and hardship on the frontier. Even the engineers were not exempt from these enforced changes, and in June, 1837, Lieutenant Lee was ordered to report to the Department of the Mississippi to help in building the levees and jetties in process of construction on the banks of the great river. Only two years before that he had made a short trip into what was then the Northwest, for he had been appointed astronomer of a commission that laid the boundary-line between Ohio and Michigan. Now, however, this last duty entailed a somewhat longer separation from his family. It was no easy work that fell to his lot,

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for not only did he have to help keep the waters of the great stream within bounds, but he had to overcome certain prejudices of the shore inhabitants, and once or twice riots were narrowly averted.

In 1838 Lee was made captain of Engineers, and subsequently he came to the East and was stationed at Fort Hamilton, near New York City, where he was soon at work upon the defences. His life was tranquil and only filled with the duties of his position, duties to which he brought all of his intelligence and devotion. And so matters ran along until 1846. He had been appointed a visitor to West Point in 1844, and had earlier refused the offer of a professorship at that institution, preferring to keep more in touch with the active side of his profession.

But now a great change was to come into his life. He was to face scenes that called for the display of those military gifts that afterwards gained for him a name as one of the first soldiers this country has produced.

War was brewing along the Texan frontier. In fact, it had practically been declared by Mexico in June, 1845. James K. Polk, of Tennessee,

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was then President of the United States, and he and the party that he represented had declared in favor of the annexation of Texas, that had but lately thrown off, in a gallant war, the yoke of Mexico, and concluded a treaty with the United States in April, 1844. General Zachary Taylor was down in the Rio Grande with an army of about four thousand men. It was "touch and go," to use the expression, whether war would take place or not. But at last the final clash came. Shots were exchanged and hostilities commenced on April 24, 1846. All available officers in every branch of the service received orders that gave them but short time for preparation before they would have to hasten to the scene of action. In the early fall of 1846 Captain Lee joined the staff of General John E. Wool, who had been placed in command of a body of troops in Texas, most of them volunteers, a hurriedly organized force sent to assist General Taylor in his invasion of Mexico from the north. Lee found himself associated with many men with whom, years afterwards, he was subsequently to share privation and hardship, the joys of victory and the sorrows of defeat.

VI

ALONG THE RIO GRANDE

ALTHOUGH it was December, it was intensely hot along the Rio Grande, and at Saltillo, where General Wool's division was encamped, the troops were glad to seek the shadow of tents or wagons in order to escape the glare of the mid-day sun. Captain Lee was in his tent, writing at a little table, when Captain William D. Fraser, his assistant in the Engineer Corps, entered. He removed his heavy hat and seated himself on the ground, so that what breeze there was stirring might fan him as it came in under the flap of the canvas tent.

"Strange sort of weather for Christmas, Captain Lee," he remarked. "I'd give a good deal to hear the jingle of sleigh-bells and to have a touch of old Massachusetts just now. I have just finished my Christmas letters, and I think I have begun them all with complaints about the

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weather. Don't let me interrupt your writing. I suppose you're doing the same thing."

Lee glanced down at the paper on the rough table before him. He had just begun a letter addressed to his two eldest sons, for he was now the father of six children. His eldest boy was thirteen and the second was nine years of age.

"You hit it exactly, Fraser," he said. "I think always, no matter where we may be, our thoughts turn homeward at this season of the year. But don't go, you're not interrupting me. I want to talk with you. Has there been any news of the enemy brought in within the last twenty-four hours?"

"Everything is about as indefinite as ever," the captain replied. "The outposts reported yesterday that they had seen, towards evening, some of the mounted scouts, and that large columns of dust were rising also to the southward across the ridge in the direction of the pass. I hope they won't disturb us to-morrow, for, despite the temperature and the climate, we have arranged for quite a spread. Don't forget that you have promised to attend. I was told to



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hide all your maps and insist on your sharing in what promises to be rather a jolly evening."

He pointed under the flap of the tent. "See those two chickens over there tied up by the legs? They're pretty fat for Mexico, aren't they?"

"No reason why they shouldn't be," returned Captain Lee, laughing, "when you've fed them every day yourself for a week. I believe a good share of your rations have gone down those chickens' throats."

"I fear I'll miss them terribly," responded Fraser; "I've grown quite attached to them. But still I'm not so soft-hearted that it will interfere with my appetite. That big fellow over there is plump as a goose, and you remember what he was when I first got him. Heard the news? The quartermaster secured a turkey yesterday. But I won't keep you from your letters. Remember to-morrow night!"

He ducked under the flap of the tent and walked over to the sorry-looking fowls and weighed each one in his hand.

"Must have gained half an ounce since yesterday," he shouted back.

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Lee smiled again and went on with his writing. And this is the letter just as he wrote it, dated December 24th, the day before Christmas:

“I hope good Santa Claus will fill my Rob’s stocking to-night; that Mildred’s, Agnes’s, and Anna’s may break down with good things. I do not know what he may have for you and Mary, but if he only leaves for you one-half of what I wish, you will want for nothing. I have frequently thought that if I had one of you on each side of me riding on ponies, such as I could get you, I would be comparatively happy.”

But the next day, Christmas, was not to pass uneventfully. Just after the troops had breakfasted the bugles rang through the camp, and the men hastily formed in ranks and waited anxiously. A mounted Texan had arrived with the news that the Mexican army was on the move and marching northward. It looked as if there might be an action any moment. The artillery was hurriedly sent out, the horses plunging and stumbling through the heavy sand as they dragged the guns along the river-bank.

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For the second time Captain Lee had been interrupted in finishing his Christmas correspondence. Just after breakfast he had begun a letter to his wife, a letter that he finished that evening by the light of a candle, for he did not wish to miss the post for the North that left camp on the following morning, and as this letter tells the story of this Christmas Day and also has some reference to Captain Fraser's chickens, perhaps it might be well to include it, in part, as we have included the letter to his sons:

"The troops stood to their arms," he writes, "and I lay on the grass with my sorrel mare saddled by my side and telescope directed to the pass of the mountain through which the road approached. The Mexicans, however, did not make their appearance. Many regrets were expressed at Santa Anna's having spoiled our Christmas dinner, for which ample preparations had been made. The little roasters remained tied to the tent-pins, wondering at their deferred fate, and the headless turkeys retained their plumage unscathed. Finding the enemy did not come, preparations were made for dinner.

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We have had many Christmases together. It is the first time we have been entirely separated at this holy time since our marriage. I hope it does not interfere with your happiness, surrounded as you are by father, mother, children, and dear friends. I therefore trust you are happy, and that this is the last time I shall be absent from you during my life. May God bless you till then and forever after is my constant prayer."

This letter reached Arlington at the same time that the other one did that rejoiced the hearts of two little boys who spelled their epistle out before the fire, wishing with all their hearts that they were with their father and riding beside him along the Rio Grande. As for the young mother, she dried her tears quickly, and, as was her wont, wrote a cheerful, gossipy letter in reply, that, however, did not reach the soldier-husband for many a long week, and then when he was in very different surroundings and amid scenes that threatened danger to him and grief to the Arlington household more than once. The sphere of Captain Lee's activities were to be suddenly shifted—his first great chance was to

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come. But before we leave the army of General Wool, there was an adventure that befell our hero that proved his strongest point was not his proficiency with pen or pencil. Something happened that showed he possessed a spirit that must have rendered the dry and exacting work of an engineer exceedingly galling at times to his nature. It was in February, not long before the battle of Buena Vista.

The whereabouts of Santa Anna's main force was a puzzle to the American headquarters. Every day, almost, the outposts of mounted troops exchanged shots with his scouts and raiding parties; but the large number of Mexican infantry and cavalry kept themselves hidden in the barren and broken country south of the river.

A great soldier once said that "Scouts, like poets, were born, not made." And true it is—you cannot force a man to exceeding excellence in anything—mediocrity in scouting, like the same quality in poetry, is useless or nearly so. The gifts of a born scout are simple, and yet are not always found in conjunction. He, first of all, must combine fearlessness with caution; he

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must be able to mix a modicum of imagination with a large amount of assimilated fact, and make a clear and swift deduction; he must possess that rare gift of unconscious observation and the still rarer one of a memory that never fails, not only to retain but to classify. Besides all this, he must enjoy his work and shirk no part of it for reason of its difficulty or danger, and he must, moreover, have still in his blood some instincts of the primitive man who hunted for his living and was hunted for his life. He must live in the open; he must know nature, judge distance, and possess a born sense of direction. Physically he must be strong, mentally he must be balanced. Every experience must enhance the value of his natural bent and intelligence, until what other men might do after long thought he would do naturally without stopping to think at all.

Robert E. Lee was a born scout. He may, at this time, never have known it, but, as we shall see subsequently, he proved it; and he learned early what some field-officers learn all too late—the value of accurate scouting and absolute information. But to come back to the adventure.

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General Wool was complaining at mess one day that no sooner did he get an experienced man than he was taken from him and sent to some one else's command. His forces were mostly volunteers, unused to frontier life for the most part. General Taylor had with him the majority of Texas troops and regulars. General Scott was at Lobos, on the Gulf, assembling his army for the invasion of Mexico from the eastward, and Wool feared that his staff would soon be depleted of his best officers. He had been informed that Captain Lee would be taken from him to accompany the expedition soon to set sail to the south.

"Lee," said he one day, "I would give more than I could tell to know in what force the enemy are on our front. No one brings in the truth. Some days we hear they are within sight of our outposts. At other times they have moved to the east and are concentrating before Taylor. But only yesterday a frightened lieutenant of volunteers brought in word that he had seen a great body of cavalry, with guns and wagons, going westward. He had ridden, so he states, some twelve miles beyond our outposts. What

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am I to believe? My orders are not to bring on an engagement, so I am afraid to advance the pickets. What am I to do?"

"General," replied Lee, "give me a guide who knows the country and two days' leave and I may find out something."

"It is scarcely the work for an engineer," replied General Wool. "Your services are too valuable to us. I could not allow you to risk your life."

"Let me go, sir. I think I can be of more use to you in the saddle than anywhere else just at present," replied Lee, eagerly. "I will assume the responsibility—give me two days."

The general thought for a moment. "Be back here on Thursday night, then," he said at last; "and if anything should happen to you, I shall never forgive myself."

"Thanks, general; I shall be here," said Lee, quietly; and half an hour later he was mounted on his sorrel mare riding out to the advanced line. By his side rode a little, brown-skinned, wizened man—a half-breed Mexican who had been employed as guide on several expeditions, and whose loyalty to the Northern forces had been

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fairly proved. It was told that he was an escaped Mexican soldier and that his life was forfeit for a murder of one of Santa Anna's officers.

By five o'clock in the afternoon Lee and his guide had penetrated the broken country south of the American line, and were but five or six miles from a low range of hills beyond which lay the mesa, or flat table-land, supposed to be held by the left wing of the Mexican army. It was along these hills that the American scouts had most often reported seeing the enemy.

Captain Lee spoke a little Spanish, but the Mexican, Pedro, was a taciturn fellow and had given but short replies to Lee's questions. The latter mistrusted him from the start, and soon he was given evidence that his suspicions were well founded.

Pedro all at once halted, reining in his horse with a jangle of the heavy bit.

"Mexicanos," he said, nodding towards the line of hills.

Lee looked in the direction of the guide's intently fixed gaze. Sure enough, along the skyline was moving a cloud of dust, and just then, clearly in sight, two figures on horseback ap-

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peared, standing perfectly still as if watching the plain below. The sun was an hour high above the horizon and the day was intensely hot.

Lee suddenly shifted his glance to the Mexican's cunning, wolf-like face. Something he read there confirmed his previous doubts of the man's integrity, for the Mexican was looking not at the distant hills now, but at Lee, as if trying to discover what kind of a man he had to deal with. Lee read the meaning of that look; there flashed across him the recollection of how, once, when he had been riding out of camp with some troopers, he had seen what appeared to be a mounted force confronting them, and that the officer with him was for returning at once to camp with the information. But Lee had seen the wonderful mirage before, and after some trouble he convinced his companion that it was their own figures they were looking at, reflected, distorted, and multiplied ahead of them by the atmosphere and the shimmering heat-waves.

Without replying to Pedro's exclamation, he moved his horse to the right—one of the mounted figures did the same. He lifted his hand—

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the gesture was followed. Without a word he brought his whip down smartly on the flanks of the Mexican's pony, and, touching his mare with his spurs, he and his companion were soon at a gallop towards the hills, the mirage in the air charging down to meet them. In a few seconds the ghostly horsemen had disappeared.

But Lee had made a discovery; he did not have to deal with treachery, but cowardice. The Mexican was simply a lazy coward. He had known well enough that the two figures that had apparently halted on the hill-crest were due only to the mirage, but he had hoped that Lee might have been deceived as others had been before, and that he might return to camp satisfied that he had seen the enemy. Pedro perceived that he had to deal with a man who knew something; he was, therefore, much chagrined, and tried to cover his mortification by lying.

"It was the dust, señor," he said, turning in his saddle and looking at Lee with something akin to admiration. "It was the dust, not the mirage."

"We will find out what the dust means, Pedro," Lee replied. "And look here, if you

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leave me or hesitate for an instant to follow me and to obey me, I will leave you for the big, black birds to pick."

He touched his pistols. The Mexican understood and blanched beneath his yellow skin, for the look that had accompanied the gesture proved that it was no idle threat.

Shortly after sunset they reached the hills, and here they off-saddled for an hour in order to rest their horses; and then, before the moon rose, they were climbing up, over a rough trail, to the summit. So far as he knew, none of the American scouts had gone so far south as this, and Lee might well have been satisfied with his work and returned to camp that night. But definite information was what he was seeking. The adventurous side of his nature was awakened. The charm of danger, that to some natures acts almost as an intoxication, tempted him to proceed, but not blindly or rashly. He used every caution as he approached the top of the hill, where he knew the trail led to the right into a rounded hollow, just the place for a Mexican outpost. All this he had studied carefully from below with his field-glass while there was yet daylight,

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and, although it was now dark, he had kept his bearings and was sure of his whereabouts.

Dismounting and leaving the horses with the Mexican, Lee, on foot, began a steep climb up the hill, and just as the moon, almost at the full, rose above the mesa he found himself on a shelf of rock on a level with the wide plateau and overlooking the hollow. The shadows made it difficult for him to discern objects below him at first, and he waited until he could clearly see that the place was deserted; there was nothing to be seen, either, on the wide floor of the table-land before him, and he had made a very important discovery. The trail by which he and Pedro had proceeded so far appeared to be the only way of gaining the higher ground—that is, the only way up which horses might travel—and with the practised eye of the engineer he saw that very little work with pick and spade would make it practicable for artillery. This was an important point. General Wool had been informed that a long and tedious *détour* of five days, after fording the stream before his camp, would be necessary before he could reach the upland, and that he would probably meet with strong opposition.

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Here, however, within twelve hours' march, lay an easy way out of the trouble if a strong force of sappers and road-makers could work unmolested for a day or so preparing the trail that led to the hollow. Whether there was an exit thence to the level land above was the question. But, thoroughly satisfied that there was no danger in proceeding, and quite thrilled with his discovery, Lee left his point of vantage and slid and clambered back to the spot where he had left Pedro and the horses.

He found the Mexican with his teeth chattering, almost on the point of making a run for it. He had mounted the sorrel mare and had taken the bridle off the pony and tied up the stirrups preparatory to driving the beast before him back to camp. His relief upon seeing Lee was evident. In broken words he told the captain that he was sure that he had been captured. Lee had not left his pistols in the holsters, but had tucked them in his belt when he began his climb; again he touched them significantly. If Pedro had deserted him he would have found himself in a predicament, for all the water and food he possessed were attached to his saddle, and, as

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we said before, it was a long ride back to the river.

But the most important part of his work lay before him—to discover if there was a way out of the hollow that was now less than a half-mile ahead of them. On he pressed, leading his horse, the Mexican still in terror at his heels. They came to a place where the trail made an abrupt turn and entered the little valley, and here, to Lee's delight, he found that the path continued broadening as it mounted the western slopes until it debouched upon the plain. Another very important thing he found also: in a deep watercourse, that was entirely dry where he had crossed it some distance below, he perceived a silvery gleam, and there was a deep pool of rain-water caught from a recent freshet. That the place had been recently occupied by either Mexicans or Indians was evident, for the remains of several camp-fires were there, making black patches among the gray-white stones.

Lee did not pause long to investigate. He mounted quickly, and, ordering Pedro to ride ahead, he galloped up the trail and came out of the shadows onto the open, moonlit plain. For

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another hour he rode south and then halted. The ground was covered with stunted mesquit-bushes, but in the soft sand were the marks of many hoofs. Pedro examined them and declared that they had been made since the last rain-storm, that had taken place but three days before; possibly they were forty-eight hours old.

Captain Lee now proceeded with great caution, stopping every now and then to examine the direction of the hoof-prints that led southeast away from the line of hills.

Suddenly a muttered exclamation from Pedro called his attention. The Mexican's sharp eyes had detected something that had again aroused his fears. A dim little flicker of light, like the distant flame of a small encampment, glowed among some trees that evidently grew along a distant watercourse. The moon, that had gone behind a cloud, now burst forth, and in the flooding light a long line of grayish-white objects could be made out among the bushes, not more than a mile ahead.

Pedro's fears mastered him; he besought Lee to turn back, insisting that they would both be taken prisoners, and that he would be hanged as

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a deserter and a traitor for assisting to guide the hated Americanos.

Lee had recourse to the pistols again ; drawing one from the holster, he presented it at the coward's head, and threatened him with instant death if he did not ride forward and obey him. Some of the mysterious objects could be seen moving, and all at once something darted from behind a bush, almost under the nose of the sorrel mare. At the same time a shrouded, black figure rose almost at Lee's stirrup, and a voice, in great fear, gave a smothered exclamation in Spanish. It was startling, but Lee's calm nerves had allowed no distortion of his judgment.

The first object he had seen to be an innocent sheep, and the tattered figure trembling beside him he saw not to be a sentry of Santa Anna's army, but an equally innocent herder evidently aroused from sleep.

The man at first was too badly frightened to reply to his captor's questions, for Lee had caught him by the collar of his ragged shirt before the fellow had a chance to take to his heels. After repeated assurances that his life was in no danger, he found his tongue and replied to

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Pedro's questioning. The news he gave was of great importance and yet disquieting. The Mexican outposts were not over an hour's ride away, and Santa Anna intended to advance in two days—he was waiting for his artillery, that had been delayed; but in two days—the herder was sure of the time—he would move northward towards the river. The fire that had first attracted the attention of the little scouting party of two was where some of the Mexican cavalry outposts had cooked their supper. They had then ridden back to the main body, that, as the herder stated, could not be more than ten miles distant.

This was enough for Lee. He had accomplished his purpose, in that he had practically established touch with the enemy, and there was nothing to be gained by accepting further risks. Pedro had been instructed by Lee that in case they should fall in with any of the stragglers or camp-followers of the enemy in the dark they should represent themselves as belonging to Santa Anna's army. Lee's uniform was shrouded under a heavy cloak, and it was evident that the herder, after his first fright, had believed the

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story, especially as, much to Pedro's discomfiture, Lee had ridden some distance in the direction of the still-flickering camp-fire before turning to the north again.

When he was sure that he was out of earshot, Lee gave the sorrel mare her head, and, despite the roughness of the ground and the danger of a fall, rode at full speed for the hills. His scouting instinct stood him in good stead. Without having to cast to the left or to the right, he found himself where the trail sank out of the plateau into the slope of the hollow. Still at a trot, he urged his scrambling horse through the gorge, and just as the moon went down and the gray dawn began to appear in the east he found himself on the plain below, with twenty miles to ride before he would be once more back in the American lines. Lee had snatched a few minutes time to water the horses at the pool in the hollow, but still the sorrel mare could scarcely drag one weary leg after the other when, at seven o'clock in the morning, they arrived at the outpost. The Mexican's pony, strange to relate, had stood the distance better than the thoroughbred, and fell to nibbling the grass as soon as Pedro had

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removed the heavy saddle. Lee at once sent one of the troopers with a note to General Wool, giving him the information he had gathered, which was of tremendous importance at that moment. He also requested that a squadron of dragoons be sent him with rations for three days, and he requested permission to ride forward and take possession of the trail, for the point was of such strategic value that Lee in his note stated he could not overestimate it. When the note was despatched Lee threw himself on the ground under the shelter of a blanket spread over a bush and fell asleep. He had been fourteen hours in the saddle, had ridden between sixty and seventy miles, and had had no sleep for almost forty-eight hours. But in less than three he was up again and mounted on a big, brown charger that General Wool had sent him; he was guiding the squadron over the plain at a gallop, and by noon he had occupied the hollow and established the bivouac. The very next day pick and shovel were at work transforming the rough trail, that had been used only by the arrieros, to a military road. The truth of the sheep-herder's story about the movement

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of Santa Anna's army was very soon confirmed, for on the second day shots were exchanged between the outposts; but the Mexicans, seeing the advantage the Americans possessed in holding the pass, did not advance in force.

It was, perhaps, the success of Lee's first experiment in scouting that led him subsequently into further experiments of the same sort. But they were to be made under different circumstances and for another leader. Things happened just as General Wool had predicted: orders had been received for Lee to join General Scott, and to proceed with him from Lobos down the Gulf to a point off the city of Vera Cruz, that had been selected as the first objective of General Scott's invasion.

Although the orders meant an opportunity for advancement, and were in themselves more or less of a promotion, Lee regretted very much leaving General Wool, for whom he entertained feelings of the most sincere friendship, and the general was almost in despair at having to part with so useful a member of his staff. The inexperienced volunteers had been a constant source of worry to him, and he knew he would miss the

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cool judgment and the soldierly qualities of Lee. Nevertheless, at the battle of Buena Vista, on February 23d, despite Wool's pessimism, his division distinguished itself, as history proves.

VII

BEFORE VERA CRUZ

IT was soon after the commencement of actual hostilities that General Scott had requested permission from the government to join General Taylor and to push forward into Mexico, following a plan of his own that he felt sure would enable him to reach the enemy's capital. But, despite all his endeavors, the hero of Lundy's Lane was held back by departmental duties, and was put off, time after time, by the authorities at Washington. It was not until November that he received orders to start overland for the seat of hostilities. Travelling was slow, the roads were heavy, and he did not arrive at the mouth of the Rio Grande until January 1, 1847. Immediately he began the difficult task of mustering his army. From the very outset he met with opposition. He was compelled to draw his forces, in a great measure from those of General

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Taylor, and, of course, the latter was loath to part with any. At last, however, Scott succeeded in getting together some twelve thousand men, and, anxious to escape the yellow-fever, that was bound to make its appearance on the coast in the spring, he set sail on March 9th, leaving ten thousand men to support General Taylor and hold the country that he had taken in so many bloody encounters.

In the little army that accompanied General Scott were many officers destined soon to be famous in their country's history. Among them were Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, the future commanders-in-chief of the two greatest armies the world has ever seen, and two of the greatest military geniuses of all time.

Strange to say, Lee's brother Sydney was an officer on board the *Mississippi*, one of the conveying fleet. It was a beautiful day when they left Lobos Island, and it must have been a fine sight to have seen the vessels spread their white sails and, with the cheers of their companions ringing in their ears, start southward. But let an eye-witness tell the story of the short voyage and the landing of the troops. An officer of the

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United States sloop-of-war *Albany*, that was then awaiting the transports off the Mexican coast, writes as follows:

“On the 5th day of March, 1847, while the American squadron was lying at Anton Lizardo, a norther sprang up, and commenced blowing with great violence. The ships rolled and pitched, and tugged at their anchors as if striving to tear them from their hold, while the sea was white with foam. About noon, General Scott’s fleet of transports, destined for the reduction of Vera Cruz, came like a great white cloud bearing down before the storm. The whole eastern horizon looked like a wall of canvas. Vessel after vessel came flying in under reduced sail, until the usually quiet harbor was crowded with them. A perfect wilderness of spars and rigging met the eye at every turn; and for five days all was bustle, activity, and excitement. Officers of the two services were visiting about from ship to ship; drums were beating, bands of music playing, and everything told of an approaching conflict.

“On the 10th the army was conveyed in huge

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surf-boats from the transports to the different ships of war, which immediately got under way for Vera Cruz. During the passage down to the city, I was in the foretop of the United States sloop-of-war *Albany*, from which place I had a good view of all that occurred. It was a 'sight to see!' The tall ships of war sailing leisurely along under their top-sails, their decks thronged in every part with dense masses of troops, whose bright muskets and bayonets were flashing in the sunbeams; the jingling of spurs and sabres; the bands of music playing; the hum of the multitude rising up like the murmur of the distant ocean; the small steamers plying about, their decks crowded with anxious spectators; the long lines of surf-boats towing astern of the ships, ready to disembark the troops—all these tended to render the scene one of the deepest interest.

"About three o'clock P.M., the armada arrived abreast of the little, desert island of Sacrificio, where the time-worn walls and battlements of Vera Cruz, and the old, grim castle of San Juan de Ulloa, with their ponderous cannon, tier upon tier, basking in the yellow rays of the sun, burst upon our view. It was a most beautiful

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sight, that embarkation. I still retained my position in the foretop, and was watching every movement with the most anxious interest; for it was thought by many that the enemy would oppose the landing of our troops. About four o'clock the huge surf-boats, each capable of conveying one hundred men, were hauled to the gangways of the different men-of-war, and quickly laden, formed in a single line, nearly a mile in length; and, at a given signal, commenced slowly moving towards the Mexican shore. It was a grand spectacle. On, on went the long range of boats, loaded down to the gunwales with brave men, the rays of the slowly departing sun resting upon their uniforms and bristling bayonets and wrapping the far inland and fantastic mountains of Mexico in robes of gold. On they went; the measured stroke of the countless oars mingling with the hoarse, dull roar of the trampling surf upon the sandy beach, and the shriek of the sea-birds, until the first boat struck the shore, and quick as thought our army began to land. At this instant the American flag was planted, and, unrolling its folds, floated proudly out upon the evening breeze; the crews of the men-of-

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war raised fierce cheering, and a dozen bands of music, at the same time, struck up 'The Star-Spangled Banner.'"

It must have been a brave sight indeed, but the thing that most astonishes us in reading of the transaction is the fact that it was done so easily. One would have thought, in view of subsequent happenings, that the Mexicans would have tried to oppose the landing in some way, for most certainly it was all in full sight and contained no element of surprise. If the governor of the city of Vera Cruz had been more of a soldier and less of a spectacular performer the landing could not have taken place without great loss of life.

The city of Vera Cruz was of the old Spanish construction, surrounded by a wall, and at the angles there were forts and parapets. The castle of San Juan de Ulloa, that fronted the city and was its principal defence, contained 400 guns and 5000 men under the command of the governor-general, Morales. When the Americans had succeeded in landing and were starting from the beach to take the positions that

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had been allotted them in the well-conceived plan of investment, the Mexicans opened fire, but the second and third divisions had, like the first, reached the shore without accident, and under the bright, starlit sky that night regiment after regiment swept up into full view of the city. The fortresses at once opened upon them. The casualties, however, amounted to but very little, one or two men being slightly hurt. All the next day the troops kept marching to the westward in order to completely surround the city, and as soon as each division had reached its position the men were set to work digging trenches.

It was a fortunate thing that the Mexicans did not make any sortie just at this time, for with the exception of a few light pieces and howitzers all of the American artillery was still back on the ships, and a fierce norther or gale blowing up suddenly, the vessels were in danger of dragging their anchor, and the crews stood by all night ready to make sail in case they be forced to put to sea. For three days afterwards the surf that broke on the beach was exceedingly heavy, but, nevertheless, most of the ordnance

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was got on shore. With considerable difficulty, for Scott was from the outset hampered by a dearth of draught animals, the guns were dragged to the trenches.

The castle of San Juan de Ulloa, which stood at the end of the reef of Gallega directly opposite the city and separated from it by a long stretch of shallow water, was considered impregnable by the Mexicans. In fact, Santa Anna, the commander-in-chief, had given it out as his opinion that the garrison at Vera Cruz and the castle could resist successfully a long siege and investment. He was sanguine that upon the breaking out of the yellow fever in the spring the American troops would have to withdraw or suffer the dire consequences of meeting the deadly enemy of all foreigners. That there would be any surrender before spring Santa Anna did not bring into his reckoning, and consequently he devoted himself entirely to organizing the army then confronting General Taylor. He left the difficulties of the situation and the climate to confront General Scott.

Of the Mexican defences General Scott wrote as follows:

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“The walls and forts of Vera Cruz, in 1847, were in good condition. Subsequent to its capture by the French, under Admiral Baudin and the Prince de Joinville, in 1838, the castle had been greatly extended, almost rebuilt, and its armament about doubled. Besides, the French were allowed to reconnoitre the city and castle and choose their positions of attack without the least resistance, the Mexicans deprecating the war with that nation, and hence ordered not to fire the first gun. Of this injunction the French were aware. When we approached, in 1847, the castle had the capacity to sink the entire American navy.”

By the 20th, after ten days of the hardest kind of labor, the army was ranged along the high lands back of the city, extending from the little village of Vergara on the Jalapa road to the point of landing. Worth's division was on the south, then came Peterson's, and then General Twigg's. Some distance ahead of the main line were pushed forward the American batteries, and Lieutenant Oliver Hazard Perry, the son of the hero of Erie, had dismounted one of the 68-

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pounder waist-guns of the *Albany*, and with a number of volunteers had succeeded in mounting this gun at a point that well commanded the town. Subsequently three other guns were added and their emplacement was called the naval battery. All communications between the city and the interior had been completely cut off by the 15th. The question of the city's fall became only a matter of time, and as yet no attempt at bombardment had been made. On the 22d Scott called a meeting of his "little cabinet," for as such he had denominated his staff, and at the meeting there were present Colonel Totten, chief-engineer; Lieutenant-Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, acting inspector-general; Captain Robert E. Lee, engineer; and Lieutenant Henry L. Scott, acting adjutant-general. There had been much advocacy of an assault in force, and there were many officers who had implored General Scott to carry the place by storm. Much pressure had been brought to bear upon him, and no doubt he had to exercise great restraint, for his army was young, in fine fettle, and hard to keep in hand.

Scott opened the meeting, which was very

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solemn in character, by making the following speech:

“We, of course, gentlemen, must take the city and castle before the return of the vomito [yellow fever], if not by head-work, by the slow, scientific process of storming, and then escape by pushing the conquest into the healthier interior. I am strongly inclined to attempt the former, unless you can convince me that the other is preferable. Since our thorough reconnoissance, I think the suggestion practicable with a very moderate loss on our part. The second method would, no doubt, be equally successful, but with the cost of an immense slaughter to both sides, including noncombatants, Mexican men, women, and children; because assaults must be made in the dark, and the assailants dare not lose time in taking and guarding prisoners without incurring the certainty of becoming captives themselves, till all the strongholds of the place are occupied. The horrors of such slaughter as that, with the usual terrible accompaniment, are most revolting. Besides these objections, it is necessary to take into account the probable loss of some two

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thousand, perhaps three thousand, of our best men in an assault, and I have received but half the number promised me. How, then, could we hope to penetrate into the interior? . . .”

A letter which he sent to Governor Morales, requesting the surrender of the city, was answered by a courteous defiance. The Mexican commander rejected all terms offered him, merely stating that he would defend the place to the best of his ability, and that no one would leave Vera Cruz under any pretence whatsoever—for Scott had offered safe-conduct to women and children and foreign residents. But as all negotiations had fallen completely through, there could be but one result. On the 24th the bombardment began, but it was not until the following day that all of the great guns were in action. The heavy batteries facing the Puerta de la Merced and the fort de Santiago were almost within musket-range, and the mortars and howitzers there rained a perfect shower of missiles and projectiles into the city. But the Paixhans guns that had been taken from the ships performed the deadliest service. The Mexicans had

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no idea of their existence or position. The works had been completed under cover of darkness and behind the shelter of a dense line of chaparral. When the battery was disclosed by the cutting away of the bushes the consternation of the enemy was apparent. In this battery, which, with the exception of two pieces of field artillery, was under command of naval officers entirely, was Lee's brother Sydney, and here the soldier and sailor met. One of the artillery subalterns being killed, Sydney Lee took his place, and Lee, subsequently to the fight, describes the scene as follows:

“The first day this battery opened, Smith served one of the guns. I had constructed the battery, and was there to direct its fire. No matter where I turned, my eyes reverted to him, and I stood by his gun whenever I was not wanted elsewhere. Oh, I felt awfully, and am at a loss what I should have done had he been cut down before me! I thank God that he was saved! He preserved his usual cheerfulness, and I could see his white teeth through all the smoke and din of the fire. I had placed three

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32 and three 68 pound guns in position. . . . Their fire was terrific, and the shells thrown from our battery were constant and regular discharges, so beautiful in their flight and so destructive in their fall. It was awful! My heart bled for the inhabitants. The soldiers I did not care so much for, but it was terrible to think of the women and children. . . . I heard from Smith to-day; he is quite well, and recovered from his fatigue."

It was a wonder that Lee did not break down under the strain of the first week's work, for not only was he constantly walking or riding along the line of intrenchments, superintending the erection of batteries and the emplacement of the guns, but late at night he could be seen in his tent at headquarters poring over the maps and plans, and at every odd moment that he could snatch from his duties devoting himself to the study of the Spanish language. Of one thing he was certain—it would not be long before the army would be on the move, and the difficulty of reducing Vera Cruz would be nothing to overcoming the obstacles that nature presented to an invading

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army on its way to the capital. A costly victory, he reasoned, would be as disastrous as a severe defeat.

In a letter written at that time he expressed his joy at noticing the care that Scott took in saving his men. It boded well for the success of the expedition.

VIII

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AGAIN the guns were roaring and the heavy shells bursting in the streets and on the house-tops of Vera Cruz, and above the island fortress of San Juan. Just out of range of the Mexican guns the fleet were joining in the din, and the well-directed broadsides sent tons of metal over the American lines into the city.

General Winfield Scott, on foot, was walking in a little sandy hollow back of the naval battery and with him was Captain Lee. The general of late had become more and more convinced of his aide's usefulness, and had grown to value also the charm of his companionship. Although Scott was considered to be rather a pompous person by those who wished to detract, if possible, from his character, the truth of the matter was that he did not unbend to every one, and to few he showed the gentle and lovable side of

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a strongly sensitive temperament. For some reason Lee not only had won his trust and admiration, but he had appealed to his affection, and the general talked to him as he talked to few others among his army acquaintances. He knew that he could always rely upon the young man's loyalty and discretion, and he perhaps allowed more of his inner self to show in consequence. They were talking, odd to tell, not of the present military exigencies, but of war in the abstract, and it was strange to hear the general, while the white, sulphurous clouds from the great guns enveloped them both, speak as follows:

"It is exactly as I said before, Captain Lee; because a man is a soldier and has been present at scenes of carnage and bloodshed, he is supposed to be devoid of gentler feelings, but this is not necessarily true. . . . I cannot help thinking, when I see those shells describing their graceful curves and bursting so prettily in the bright sunlight, of the scenes that must be enacted yonder in the streets of the city. It grieves me to think of the women and children exposed to the frightful dangers; and yet what can we do? Governor Morales refused my offer of a safe-con-

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duct for all noncombatants, and the responsibility is now his, or theirs—for apparently the foreigners have chosen to remain—yet I cannot overcome the feeling of great pity and compassion.” The general paused. “You will notice as you grow older, Lee, that this softening tendency increases. We are supposed to grow wiser with our years, and all this may be part of our wisdom. War is dreadful, and our appreciation of the value of human life increases as we draw near to its certain end.”

Probably the same thought that had entered the mind of the British general Wolfe the day before the battle on the Heights of Abraham, before Quebec, crossed General Scott’s mind.

“Gray has it all summed up in his ‘Elegy,’” he said, quietly, and to Lee’s surprise quoted two stanzas of the poem in full. It would probably have amused the other officers, who did not know Scott so well, to have overheard this conversation. Even Lee was forced to smile when the general, halting suddenly in the rear of one of the big guns, ended his quotation abruptly and addressed the young officer in charge. “You have lost your range, sir,” he thundered. “More

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elevation, sir!" The young officer saluted and nervously superintended the resighting of the gun, while the general, forgetting his moralizing, stood waiting for the effect of the next shot.

"Lee," he said, at last, coming back to the conversation, when he had watched the trajectory of the shell, "there are a lot of young hot-heads who will take the chances of the grave for an opportunity to tread the paths that lead to glory."

"It's all in the life of a soldier," Lee replied.

"Yes," replied the general, "but you'll find again, as you grow older, that you will think more of results and less of the methods and glory. Should you think, for instance, that the town yonder could be carried by assault?"

Lee knew well what was in the general's mind, for he had heard the talk that had been going through the different messes. The younger officers rather deplored the slow process of a siege. Even some commanders of regiments openly advocated an assault in force, and had expressed loudly to their juniors their belief that ultimately cold steel would be called upon to carry the day. In fact, Lee remembered that only the evening

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before he had heard a colonel of infantry make the following statement:

“If old Zachary Taylor was here in command, our men, before this, would have been cheering on the ramparts.”

Some of this talk must have reached the commander-in-chief. He waited for Lee's reply.

“I should not counsel an assault, general,” replied Lee. “It would be unnecessary.”

The general remained silent for a few minutes.

“And yet,” he said, at last, slowly, “if such a thing were decided upon, I suppose that you would be petitioning me to let you go in with the advance. But you know I don't believe in risk. Yet I understand these young hot-heads well, and, if I restrain them, I have a sympathy with their feelings.”

As he finished speaking the general sighed, and Lee, remembering the story of Scott's behavior at Fort George and Chippewa, and at the battle of Lundy's Lane, years before, when he had by his reckless daring and bravery courted death a thousand times and had been twice badly wounded, smiled at his mood. It was not

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long before he had occasion to remind the general of his words.

The next day the walls and the nearest intrenchments opposite the heaviest American batteries were found to be badly shattered. Great breaks and breaches appeared in the masonry, and in several places the Mexican guns had been dismounted and the gunners driven from their posts.

At ten o'clock in the morning of the 26th Scott and Lee were once more together, both on horseback this time, riding along the well-trampled road to the northwest, nearest the camp of the infantry, whose principal work up to this time had been accomplished with pick and spade. The furious bombardment of the day before had, under orders, slackened into regular firing as if at drill; but now all fell strangely silent. Not a gun had been discharged for fully three minutes.

"I wonder what this means," exclaimed the general, spurring his charger up to the summit of the sandy hillock, and there the reason was plain to be seen. A white flag was flying from the top of the big building whose shattered roof

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showed above the walls, and three mounted men, bearing a white flag also, were approaching the American lines. Along the batteries the gunners were crowding up into sight, and away to the south there broke out the sounds of distant cheering.

"So, Morales has come to his senses," laughed the general. "I did not expect it to happen so soon. He has surrendered."

News had reached the infantry camp, and from all sides men came pressing forward. In a very few minutes the bearer of the white flag stood in the presence of the American general.

Scott was angry. Morales had not come to his senses after all. The letter that the officer read, couched in high-sounding Spanish phrases, merely requested an armistice while the governor complied with General Scott's offer of the day before. He now asked that all women and children and foreigners should be allowed to leave the city, in order, as Morales expressed it, that he might be "better able to defend it to its last gasp."

The decision of General Scott contrasted

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strangely with his humanitarian sentiments of the day before.

"My compliments to the governor," he replied, "and you may tell him that no one shall leave the city, with my permission, until he surrenders or until our flag is flying where that white flag flies just now."

The Mexican officers returned, and during the day constant shots were fired into the city, as Scott intimated, "to hasten the governor's decision."

But another little incident took place that is well worth recording. While the short negotiations were in progress a number of officers had gathered near, and, emboldened perhaps by the fact that General Scott appeared to be in a proper mood to receive suggestions, the hot-heads were emboldened to approach him through the medium of a spokesman, the one they had selected being the very colonel that Lee had heard express himself as at variance with the general's waiting policy.

The colonel boldly requested, in the name of the junior officers, permission to call for volunteers to storm the fortress at dusk that evening.

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He stated that the men were eager, and the result would be certain of success.

Scott looked calmly at the colonel and at the anxious group of young men who awaited the result of the inquiry.

"How many men do you suppose it would cost to do it, sir?" he asked.

"Possibly two thousand or two thousand five hundred," the officer replied, making a swift mental calculation. "It would depend upon circumstance."

Scott smiled at him and then grew stern.

"But I can take it with much less sacrifice," he said, at last.

"Yes, general," replied the fiery colonel, "but the army will win no glory and the officers will have no opportunities to distinguish themselves."

Scott stepped out before the group, so that his words could be heard by all, and, raising his voice, he replied, imperiously: "Remember, gentlemen, that a commander who deliberately sacrifices one life more than is necessary to secure a victory is guilty of murder. Back to your posts, sirs!"

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General Scott was much criticised subsequently for not allowing Governor Morales's request to be granted, and the following is a copy of the document which was sent to Washington and also to the foreign consuls in Vera Cruz on the morning of the 27th:

"I enclose a copy of a memorial received last night, signed by the consuls of Great Britain, France, Spain, and Prussia, within Vera Cruz, asking me to grant a truce to enable the neutrals, together with Mexican women and children, to withdraw from the scene of havoc about them. I shall reply, the moment that an opportunity may be taken, to say: 1. That a truce can only be granted on the application of Governor Morales, with a view to surrender. 2. That in sending safeguards to the different consuls, beginning as far back as the 13th inst., I distinctly admonished them—particularly the French and Spanish consuls—and, of course, through the two, the other consuls, of the dangers that have followed. 3. That although at that date I had already refused to allow any person whatsoever to pass the line of investment either way, yet the

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blockade had been left open to the consuls and other neutrals to pass out to their respective ships of war up to the 22d inst.; and 4th. I shall enclose to the memorialists a copy of my summons to the governor, to show that I had fully considered the impending hardships and distresses of the place, including those of women and children, before one gun had been fired in that direction. The intercourse between the neutral ships of war and the city was stopped at the last-mentioned date by Commodore Perry, with my concurrence, which I placed on the ground that the intercourse could not fail to give to the enemy moral aid and comfort."

The morning of the surrender, Scott's remark about "reckless hot-heads" was called to his mind by Captain Lee. Mounted on his big horse the general had ridden along the earth-works and approached an angle where the shot was flying thickest. Here he noticed some gunners and bombardiers climb up into full sight in order to watch the effect of their fire. The general shouted to them, angrily, "Down, men, down! Don't expose yourselves." Still seated

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in his saddle he motioned them fiercely with his arms to leave the ramparts.

There was a private standing by who looked the general in the face and, as he saluted, said, "But, general, you are the most exposed."

Scott almost laughed at the man's boldness.

"Oh," replied he, "generals nowadays can be made out of anybody, but good men are hard to get."

Captain Lee, overhearing this remark, recalled to General Scott his military caution the day before, but the only response was a gruff laugh and a shake of the shoulders. Late in the afternoon of the 27th, the day the memorial was written, a second flag of truce was seen to be raised, and this time Governor Morales really surrendered the city and the castle of San Juan, and on the 29th, at ten o'clock in the morning, the garrisons marched out, with all the honors of war, and laid down their arms. The officers were allowed to preserve their private effects and horses, and the whole army of defenders was paroled and given five days to return to their respective homes.

The American loss during the siege was small.

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The casualties, including officers and men killed and wounded, were sixty-four. The Mexican loss was considerably greater, and, alas! many noncombatants had met their death. In all there were surrendered 5000 prisoners, 10,000 stands of arms, 400 pieces of ordnance, and large stores of ammunition.

Vera Cruz had been spoken of as the Gibraltar of Mexico, and Santa Anna had considered it impregnable, and yet it had fallen after a siege of twenty days. In summing up his report and in conversation afterwards Scott gave great credit to the assistance rendered him by Robert E. Lee in drawing up the plans of the intrenchments and in mounting and placing the batteries.

But Captain Lee's more active participation in the Mexican campaign was subsequent to the siege, and the services that he rendered his commander were given at a time when they were badly needed, and when there was danger enough in the mere accomplishment to suit any of Scott's most reckless hot-heads, as we shall see.

IX

WITH THE ADVANCE

“I HOPE we will soon be moving out of this, Captain Lee; it is getting pretty warm,” observed a young officer in the uniform of a second lieutenant of engineers, as he came into the headquarters office and met his superior standing by the doorway. “They say the yellow fever will soon begin to work along the coast. It will be a bad thing to have here in Vera Cruz; as it is, I begin to notice a difference in the troops. Inaction tells on men more than hard work.”

Captain Lee listened to these sage remarks from his subaltern, without a smile.

“It won’t be long, Mr. McClellan,” he replied. “Our horses are coming in now, and a very fair lot they are.” As he spoke he looked out under the awning at a number of horses and mules that were being driven down the wide, dusty street. It was a fortunate thing for the Amer-

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ican army that Scott's early policy was one of conciliation of the inhabitants, for the greater portion of his draught animals were being purchased, and paid for in gold, from the Mexicans themselves. It would have been no task at all for the people of the neighborhood to have driven their cattle, mules, and horses up into the mountains; but the general's wise plans had prevented this, and his appeal to their cupidity overcame their feelings of patriotism. The story of how this came about would make a separate chapter, for which there is no room, in this telling. But Scott had trusted implicitly to the honesty of an American contractor, a resident of Vera Cruz, and through him had opened up communications with the natives, placing in his hands at times almost the entire funds of the paymaster's department. But to return from our digression.

"When do you think we shall be going forward?" asked the young officer of Lee, this time dropping all beating about the bush.

"In about three days," was the reply. "And no one will be more delighted to leave Vera Cruz behind him than will General Scott."

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It was the fashion among some of the younger officers still to grumble at the slowness and carefulness of "Old Fuss and Feathers," as they had nicknamed their gigantic leader. But it was not long before they had grown to depend upon him almost with the reliance of young children in a wise parent of whom, by-the-way, they stood somewhat in awe.

After a few minutes more conversation the subaltern departed and Lee was left standing there alone. The young man's name was George B. McClellan, and little did Lee think that before many years were to pass that jaunty young fellow of the inquisitive temper would be leading an invading army into his own native State. This was March 6th, and in exactly three days the vanguard of the American army was marching out of Vera Cruz along what was known as the Jalapa road, that led towards the mountains whose crest cut the sky-line to the northwest. Much to his chagrin, it may be well supposed, Lieutenant McClellan had been left behind at first, with the garrison.

As we before mentioned, this campaign was a school in which many soldiers whose names after-

wards became inscribed on the country's roll of fame gained their first taste of war and gave evidence of military powers. It may be well to mention some of those with whom Lee came into almost daily contact. There was his friend Beauregard. Young Lieutenant Grant, then twenty-five years of age, brave, self-reliant, and fertile in resource, was in the 4th Infantry. George Gordon Meade was in the Engineering Department, on the staff of General Patterson at Vera Cruz, and was a great friend of Lee. There was Irwin McDowell, subsequently the first commander of the Army of the Potomac. There was George H. Thomas, second lieutenant of the 3d Artillery; Winfield Scott Hancock, then but twenty-three years old and a lieutenant of the 6th Infantry; Joseph Hooker, on the staff of General Smith; Albert Sidney Johnston, of the Texas Rifles, and Joseph E. Johnston, of the Voltigeurs; Braxton Bragg, of the Light Artillery; Lieutenants Early and Sedgwick, the first a dragoon, the second in the artillery; Ambrose P. Hill and Daniel J. Hill, young lieutenants. And, lastly, Pope and Magruder and Thomas J. Jackson (Stonewall Jackson) and

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Ambrose E. Burnside, who joined the army while on its march.

Fitzhugh Lee, in his life of his uncle, referring to the officers of the Mexican War, says: "Little did these young fellows, who marched, bivouacked, fought, and bled side by side on the burning sands of old Mexico, imagine that in less than two decades McDowell would be training his guns on Johnston and Beauregard at first Manassas, while McClellan, Pope, Burnside, Hooker, Meade, and Grant would each in turn test the prowess of Lee; nor did their old commander, Scott, dream he was training these young men in practical strategy, grand tactics, and the science of war, in order that they might direct the information thus acquired against one another."

But during this time they were destined to win their spurs in a common cause.

The second division of regulars, under General Twiggs, first to leave the city, led the army up the wide road towards the hills. Scouts brought back the information that Santa Anna himself, with a large force of Mexican troops, held the pass of Cerro Gordo, between the National Bridge

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and Jalapa. The numbers posted there could not well be ascertained; rumor had it they were between two thousand and thirteen thousand, which was a wide margin. The Mexican outposts were known to be posted at Plan del Rio—in fact, some of General Twiggs's scouts had exchanged shots with the advance-guard on the 10th. The general, as soon as he had looked over the ground, sent for Lee. The latter had already ridden out with young Lieutenant Beauregard, a long way ahead of the army. To tell the truth, the report that the young officers brought back was not encouraging. The Mexicans seemed, with a great deal of engineering skill, to have taken advantage of every point where nature had been ready to assist them. First there was a deep river over which the main road crossed on a single narrow bridge, and almost directly from the western bank rose the steep hills through which the road wound through narrow gorges to the top. With the naked eye Lee could make out line upon line of earthworks rising one above the other, and at the top of the highest point, where the road came out on the plateau above, there was a strong, Spanish-

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built castle and stone tower. It was fortunate that Lee had been with the advance, for General Twiggs, when he had first reconnoitred the position, which he had done from a long distance, determined to take it by storm. Lee did his best to dissuade him, and General Patterson, coming up with the volunteers, who were following close behind the second division, joined with him, and they finally dissuaded Twiggs from the attempt. When Scott arrived he no sooner had looked over the ground than he concurred in the opinion of his juniors. No army could have stormed those heights from in front. As soon as Lee had joined him, Scott rode forward, and, shading his eyes from the glare of the sun that was just dipping below the hills, shook his head. The light prevented him from seeing all in detail, but Lee carefully pointed out where the intrenchments were and where the heavy batteries were placed. As the sun sank lower the whole of the line of hills was silhouetted against the sky.

“Look, general!” cried Lee, suddenly. “The big hill on the left is higher than all but the one with the tower on top—higher, I should judge,



LEE RECONNOITRING WITH THE ADVANCE

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by some forty or fifty feet. There lies the key to the position."

"But it will be impossible to get guns up there without a road, and, as I understand it, the way to Jalapa is straight through the hollow and at the base of the tower," returned Scott.

"True, general," Lee replied. "If we ever get up on the hill yonder it will not be along the Jalapa road."

Suddenly the temptation for adventure and the recollection of his long scouting trip, while under General Wool, came to him.

"Give me one companion, and leave for two days, general, and I will find out what I can and make report. It may be possible to cross the river either below or above the bridge, and it may still be further possible to get guns to the top of those enfiling hills; at all events, sir, give me permission to go and see."

General Scott looked at him quizzically. "I'd hate to lose you, captain," he said; "but if you think you can do it, you may go. Whom will you take with you?"

"Beauregard," Lee replied. "He and I were riding beyond the outposts this morning. We

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shall start as soon as night has fallen, and go on foot."

Lee left to look up Beauregard, and General Scott, half-regretting that he had given him permission to undertake the perilous journey, turned and rode back to where his staff was waiting. He said nothing to them of his conversation with his engineer. The army was moving up in sections. Although it was the 11th of the month, the heavier guns had not yet started from Vera Cruz. Orders were sent back to hurry them on. Some of the hot-heads began to prophesy that the general intended to lay siege to the whole mountain-range.

Not a soul knew of the departure of the two young officers; although they had the countersign they slipped out of camp past their own sentries, and soon were proceeding cautiously along the bank of the river away from the bridge. Neither carried any arms, except two small pistols in their belts, but each had a stout pole about eight feet long. At a place where he had noticed in the morning that the bank appeared to be somewhat shelving, Lee stepped down cautiously to the water's edge. Although it was

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pitch dark he soon perceived that he had stumbled upon a ford that probably had been discontinued since the erection of the stone bridge, or used only when the latter was out of repair. Sounding with his pole he stepped boldly into the stream. Beauregard followed him. To their surprise and delight they found that the water, after it reached their waists, grew shallower, and soon they were climbing the farther bank, where they stopped to put on their boots that they had carried over their shoulders while wading. They pressed straight onward, keeping their direction as well as they could by looking back at their own camp-fires, now some three miles away. But they had not gone more than a few hundred yards when they ran against what appeared to be a solid wall of masonry. Lee longed to strike a light from his tinder-box, but was afraid, for he knew that not far away to the left must be the lowest line of Mexican intrenchments. Feeling carefully along the surface of the rocks, he discovered that it was not a stone wall, but the corner of the precipitous cliff that he had noticed shouldered out from the first range of hills.

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Lee's retentive memory and natural sense of direction now stood him in good stead. He remembered that there was a little arroyo or valley formed by a watercourse to the right, and that the bank of the river sloped gently upward there, where the rains had brought down the loose stones and earth. Still feeling along the wall, and going carefully, he soon perceived he was, beyond doubt, at the entrance to this little gorge or chasm. In a few moments he was certain of it, for he could now see that the sky had brightened overhead and a few stars dimly shone through the clouds where before there was nothing but the overhanging brows of the hills. Lee caught his companion by the arm and they stood there listening.

At any moment they might run into a Mexican sentry now, for it was unreasonable to suppose that the enemy would not be watching on a night like this, that seemed made for a surprise. After a whispered consultation, Lee and Beauregard determined to part company for the time, and each continue a separate line of investigation. The younger officer was to proceed up the river-bank and find if the level ground

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over which they had first passed continued, and if it was possible to take artillery in that direction without first removing obstructions and preparing the way. Lee intended to proceed up the dried watercourse until he could go no farther, and then, if possible, climb the hill to the left, the one that he had decided with General Scott overtopped Cerro Gordo and the pass and was almost as high as the Spanish castle on the hill.

It had been settled between Beauregard and himself that they would not depend upon each other, and if they failed in the meeting each was to take care of himself as best he could. Beauregard was to report, at all events, at camp by daylight of the next day. Lee determined, if circumstances warranted it and he could find a safe hiding-place, to continue his observations by daylight. He had brought with him, tucked in his loose blouse, some dried beef and hard bread, and also, strapped between his shoulders, a large canteen filled with water. At great risk to his shins and knees he stumbled on, listening now and then with his heart beating, for more than once he thought he had heard the neigh-

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ing of horses or voices of men quite close to him.

As the walls of the cliff against the side of which he was walking seemed to be growing steeper and steeper, he crossed over to the other side, and, as the best of luck would have it, he now found himself opposite a crack no wider than a man's body, that stretched sideways up the hill like a broken chimney. On all fours he crept into the crevice, and, crawling and hauling himself upward, it seemed to him that he had gone some four or five hundred feet when all at once the crack narrowed so that he could progress no farther and apparently he had come to the end of his way in that direction. Looking out, he could see nothing above or below him; it was so dark he could hardly tell the difference between lying there with his eyes shut or open. Dislodging a little stone he dropped it over the side, but listen his best he heard nothing, so he imagined that he must have gone very high indeed, and wondered if the crevice had led him around the bulging shoulder of the hill to the farther side. If this were so he would now be looking down on the Jalapa road and would be almost immediate-

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ly above the line of Mexican fortifications that swept out, like vineyard terraces, from each side of the highway. He loosened a larger stone than the first and cautiously dropped it, and, in order to ascertain the height, he counted quickly the beating of his pulse to mark the seconds in the calculation. But nothing happened. He heard no sound. It was uncanny! Cautiously leaning out he peered forward, and as he did so his hand dropped slightly and not six inches below him touched soft sand and grass, and feeling with his fingers he found there the last stone that he had dropped. Where was he? He could not tell. But that the ground outside was solid he easily found out, and by feeling cautiously with his hands and feet he decided that it was not a ledge or shoulder of the hill, but a wide, open spot. And yet for the life of him he could not remember having seen such a place when he had searched the hill-sides with his glass the day before. Suddenly his fingers touched something that he at first thought was a bit of bark or wood, but as they closed upon it he rose from his knees with a feeling part of fear and part of joy. He held in his hand a worn Mexican sandal, such as

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the peons wear. And now, bending down again, he found that he was in one of those mountain-paths up which the arrieros or mule-trains used to make their way. It was used, perhaps, as a short cut from the main road to the plateau.

But the signs of man's presence, although it might prove the footing more secure, did not in the least detract from his danger. He now perceived that the mule-path must lead down into the same hollow from which he had made his climb, but must have started from the opposite side from which he had. In crawling through the cleft, while actually working upward, he had practically doubled on his track around the end of the gorge. But this, of course, he did not know at the time. Going forward carefully and, when in doubt, feeling with his hands before him, for he had left his stick in the hollow, he proceeded for nearly a quarter of a mile. The way was narrow, and on one side dropped some distance, but it still climbed upward. At a place where he was feeling his way cautiously before proceeding he stumbled into something that made him start. But an instant later his new discovery put him much at ease. There, across

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the path, lay the skeleton of a mule or horse; it was undisturbed and quite filled the narrow way. The bones were dry, and it had evidently been there some months undisturbed, since it had been picked clean by the vultures. If any one had gone down the pathway recently they could not have failed to have disturbed the skeleton, unless he had chosen to purposely avoid it, for which there would have been no reason.

It was beginning to show signs of dawn in the eastern sky, and Lee, crawling into a hollow, waited for the light to broaden. A slight mist swept up out of the valley as the sun rose and the white clouds swirled about him. When at last they drifted higher and he could see clearly he started in surprise. Directly in front was the high hill nearest the river, and to his surprise and joy he found that it was apparently unfortified. Farther to the west, on the second eminence, was a Spanish battery of twelve pieces; two small forts flanked it, and almost directly above, 200 feet higher, was the round, stone tower and the masonry wall before which the wide road to Jalapa wound into the plain. They guarded it like sentries at a gateway, and just as

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he watched, a bugle rang loud and clear, and to the top of the staff crept the flag of Mexico. But, joy—oh, joy! When Lee turned in the other direction his heart leaped. There he could see the distant houses of the road to Jalapa, and while the nearer end of the pass was hidden by the frowning stone fortress, over the plateau he could see it winding towards the town, and taking out his small telescope he could make out small clouds of dust rising from the hoofs of a little band of horsemen trotting out towards the watch-tower. The road upon which he stood had been left unguarded. For the life of him at first he could not see the reason, for although it was rough and in bad condition very little work would have made it serviceable for horses or even for artillery. As it was, it was fairly safe for infantry. Taking out his note-book he hastily made sketches and a little plan of the forts. Then, using great caution so as not to be seen, he worked himself out of the hollow, and crawling on all fours looked over the edge of the road. And now he saw plainly the reason for the Mexicans' apparent lack of caution. The road had once crossed a deep gorge or chasm at a time

when it was either spanned by a bridge or the place it now occupied was solid ground, for it ended abruptly, and from where it stopped was inaccessible without the aid of long ladders.

Looking back up the hill he perceived that he was hidden from sight of everything but the top that he had just left. Way to the east, across the river, he could see the camp of the Americans, from four to five miles distant, while by simply climbing a few feet to his right above the ledge he could look down into the valley that was crossed with the lines of intrenchments. The value of his secret burst upon him as the discovery of some foundation of science must have burst upon the ancients, with an almost overwhelming heart-lift. Five hundred men could work upon the road that he had traversed without discovery, if they made no noise, unless some one strolled out on the tops of the spur. And if they once could gain the top the whole of the Mexicans' highest position was outflanked. The castle itself might easily be carried. If the movement was driven home quickly the attacking force might reach the Jalapa road between it and the town before it could be stopped.

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Most any man would have been satisfied with the knowledge that he had gained, and would only have thought of getting back with it at once; but not so with Lee. As a boy he had never "half learned" anything; as a man he had never been satisfied with only partly understanding; there was much to lose by haste—there was much to gain by caution and careful observation. He now saw the crevice or crack by which he had made his way to the top, and he marvelled that he had followed it safely, for it had apparently dwindled away to nothing at places, and he distinctly recollected moments the night before when a leg or an arm had swung from out beneath him and he had seemed to keep himself in the little, sloping trough merely by the force of thought and prayer. He did not relish the idea of having to descend by the same passage, even in daylight, but another surprise awaited him. He found that the old road while ending abruptly on one side had years and years before continued straight ahead, and following it he saw that in his judgment a path could be dug through the crumbling rock down to the meadow. So far so good.

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But now an important discovery! Looking up the high hill directly in front of him, the one that had been unfortified on account of its supposed inaccessibility, Lee judged it possible to get guns up there on the eastern slope. In his mind's eye he began to plan a method. He even got out his note-book and made some calculations. It was while doing this that he became aware that he was hungry, and taking out his provender that had been wrapped in a stout canvas bag he fell to eating ravenously.

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AS soon as he had finished he continued his investigations, and although he expected to be compelled to wait until darkness had settled down before he dare stir into the plain below, he did not believe that it would be necessary for him to retrace his steps, if steps they could be called, down the narrow cleft in the hill. But, do his best, he could find no point about him that did not require at least a drop of forty feet or more, and as it was all rough stone, and the risk too great, he reluctantly decided that as he came up so must he go down. It would not be very much work to carry ladders from the ford, and with his engineering experience he knew a few days' work with pick and spade would make the passage easy.

He climbed up again to the top of the road, where he once more had a good view of the Mex-

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ican intrenchments, and once he feared that he had been discovered, for as he searched the stone fort with his glass he perceived what appeared to be a man with a spy-glass looking in his direction. The fellow soon after began to beckon as if much excited. For a minute Lee's heart stood still; but nothing happened. And just at dusk he started to enter the cleft in order to work his way down below to the arroyo. He debated for a long time how it would be best to go—feet or head foremost. And he decided at last on the former method of progression. But it was slow work and extremely painful. His uniform by this time was torn at elbows and knees, and the toes of his boots were worn and frayed by much digging into the rocks. It was still light enough to see near-by objects, and he wished, if possible, to get over the worst part of his journey before darkness settled down completely. He had rounded what he considered the worst turn when suddenly he heard a sound that caused his blood to run cold. Looking over his feet he perceived, not a yard away, a large rattlesnake. Lee longed for the stout pole that he had abandoned at the foot of the gorge, and for an instant he

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was in despair. If he used the little pistol that he had now thrust into the bosom of his coat, the shot might bring about him a score of Mexicans inside of twenty minutes. Yet to crawl over that snake was more or less of an impossibility. He wondered if the reptile had been there the day before, but he concluded that it had not, and that it must have dropped down from one of the fissures in the rock above. Loosening some bits of stone, he threw them, hoping to drive the beast off the ledge, or, as he expressed it in telling the story, to "put him out of action."

To his horror, however, he appeared to further incense the creature, and it crawled slowly up towards him. At the same time, in his efforts to throw a larger stone, he dislodged his own hold and slid down until his feet almost touched the vicious-looking head that was drawn back as if to strike. Insensibly he raised himself on his elbow and kicked out at the same time. As luck would have it he struck the rattler fairly with both heels and shot him out over the edge to fall the two or three hundred feet into the chasm below. All the rest of his journey to the bottom he kept thinking of his marvellous es-

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cape and thanking the Lord for his delivery from all the dangers he had that day passed through. When he reached the level it was dark.

Not taking the trouble to go down to the ford, he swam the river, although the current was then swift and the water high, and by ten o'clock he was in the American camp, safe and sound.

But if what he had accomplished may seem remarkable, what he subsequently succeeded in doing was little short of marvellous, for that night, with Beauregard's assistance, he guided one hundred and twenty picked men across the river and safely to the place where he intended to begin his road-building. And the next night almost two hundred more were added. For three days this large body of men worked there and camped there, their presence unknown to the enemy.

On the evening of the 17th the roadway had been completed, and it was not until then that the Americans were discovered, the stone fort opening on some of the working party that unfortunately had disclosed themselves. A strong wind had been blowing from the direction of the Mexican army, and probably this, and the fact

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that silence was strictly enjoined, prevented prior discovery. But Lee's work was by no means over. It was a wonder he did not break down under the strain of those busy days. All the night he labored with the other engineers superintending the raising of the artillery up to the top of the hill, the same one whose military importance he had recognized when he had first seen it from a distance, and his judgment that it was possible to get big guns to the top was borne out; for on the night of the 17th a long 24-pounder and two 24-pounder howitzers were raised up the steep sides of the mountains. It was a picturesque and wonderful sight. At the ford a bridge had been constructed for the artillery, and over two thousand men had crossed successfully, out of range of the Mexican cannon. All idea of secrecy was now abandoned. As the night was dark, huge fires were lit at the foot of the gorge, and the almost superhuman task of lifting those heavy guns up the nine hundred feet of precipitous mountain-side begun.

A detachment of infantry had already been sent to the top; they had shown themselves openly and kept firing occasionally in the direction of

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the Mexican fortifications; but to their fire little attention was paid, as the batteries on the surrounding hills were well out of range of musketry, and, owing to the steepness of the hill, it would be impossible for the Americans to advance farther in that direction. Infantry posted there were out of the fighting. The reason that the Mexicans themselves had not occupied this eminence was because it left open no road to retreat, which seemed to be the first desideratum of a Mexican position. So, as we have said, the presence of the infantry did not alarm them in the least, and what was going on on the other side of the hill they could not see. But there, on the rugged slope, five hundred men were working at each gun; long ropes were made fast to the bowlders, and with block and tackle they were heaving away, lifting foot by foot the heavy ordnance up the hill. Before daylight the howitzers were in position. In an hour they would announce their presence. The big gun would be ready soon afterwards.

Lee, almost reeling from weariness and lack of sleep, lay down among the rocks, covering himself with his cloak. Lieutenant Hagner, who had,

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with Lieutenant Laidley, been ably assisting Lee all the afternoon and night, noticed him.

"I never saw a man like that before," remarked Hagner. "To my certain knowledge this is the first time he has lain down for forty-eight hours."

"He is built of steel springs," remarked Laidley. "But now I am going to follow his example. There is an hour or two before us."

He sat down with his back against the stones and went off into a peaceful slumber.

But Lee was too tired to sleep. He had never known that he possessed nerves, yet now every one he had seemed to be quivering. But his mind was never more active. The physical weariness in his limbs and the pain in his tired feet seemed to have left him. He did not reason about all this, nor did he know that he was calling upon the deepest resources of his vital force; owing to his abstemious life and good habits, he had a fund of energy that few other men might find at their disposal. His credit at the bank of health was good—it was an account that had never been overdrawn. There was much more "go" left in him than even Lieutenant Hagner

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had supposed. Whether he slept or not, Lee could never recollect. The sound of a bugle brought him to his feet. The morning mists were all about the hill-tops, but down in the valley the Mexican troops were stirring, and bugle answered bugle. The American gunners on the hill, shrouded in the clouds, were only waiting for the air to clear. At last, like the lifting of a veil, first the valley below at their feet became visible, and then the opposite slopes, crossed by trenches and stone walls, well out of the range of musketry; and then, higher and higher, looming into view one after another came the neighboring crests, crowned with their frowning forts. There was only one, the old Spanish castle, that was higher than this hill.

What the Mexicans must have thought when they heard that first gun fired, the American officers would like to have known. The consternation of those below in the valley was evident. Men in brilliant uniforms could be seen rushing hither and thither, although, as yet, no shot had been turned down at them, the heavy shells being directed across the valley at the forts on the same level. At nine o'clock the long 32-pounder

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joined in the cannonade. So surprised were the defenders that at first there was no reply, even the castle remaining silent, until at last, with a very bad elevation, the Mexicans managed to bring some guns to bear in the direction of the little battery.

General Twiggs, who with his infantry had rushed the first line of intrenchments the day before and found himself enfiladed, was now saved, for had he not received some support from above him he would not have been able to retain his position. The firing broke out heavily in the valley, and the second advance of Twiggs's brave followers began, directed against the left of the enemy's line.

Lee's fatigue had gone from him. It was as if he had risen from the most refreshing slumber. His brain was all alert, his eye was clear and sparkling. As he stood there behind the guns he knew that his work had been well done; yet now he longed for something more to do. He wished that, instead of being on the staff, he was leading any one of those charging, cheering regiments that he could now see clambering and pushing their way up the terraces and swarming



“AS HE STOOD THERE BEHIND THE GUNS HE KNEW THAT HIS
WORK HAD BEEN WELL DONE”

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along the road. They were being swept by grape and musket-fire, but they were driving the Mexicans before them like chaff. But Lee knew, and knew it well, that from the front the Spanish-built fort and the stone wall could not be taken. He wondered how it was going with the men on the new road that he had constructed along the old arriero path. Why had they not appeared at the crest? The reserves had crossed the river; the 7th and 3d Infantry and the Rifles that had not yet become engaged were waiting to go in. The 1st and 4th Artillery, with their horses straining at their collars, had rumbled across the bridge and swept in a long line up the stream over the meadow. The hill-sides now were shrouded in battle-smoke and the movements below, at first so distinct, were hidden from the sight of the hill where the howitzers and the long 32-pounder were at work. They slackened their firing, in fear of pouring their deadly showers down upon their own troops, for Twiggs and Pillow had covered half the distance to the top. But Pillow unfortunately had been stopped, almost repulsed, and whole companies of his command were almost swept away

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by the droves of bullets that had caught them partially in the flank.

"Where is Captain Lee?" cried a voice.

A young officer, panting from his scramble up the hill, was shouting with as much breath as there was left on his badly winded body.

"Here I am!" cried Lee, running forward to meet him.

"Orders are for you, sir, to join Colonel Harney at the foot of the hill and guide the forces on the left up to the Jalapa road. You are to dispose of the troops according to your own judgment and discretion."

He handed Lee a slip of paper on which were a few scribbled words from General Scott.

No mountain-climbing peon could have jumped down that hill with swifter and surer leaps than did Captain Lee. In less than five minutes he had joined Harney, and, with the men following on double, they soon reached the gulley on the farther side of which Lee's military road climbed the hill. For a quarter of an hour almost they were safe from the Mexican fire. But the volleys that rattled and rang above them, and the spent balls that whistled over their

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heads or thudded here and there against the rocks, showed them that the fight was going on. It was evident that the first troops to try the flanking movement, upon which the success of the day depended, had been stopped.

Lee caught Harney by the arm when they reached the top. "The castle and the stone fort are over there," he cried, pointing through the white smoke that hid everything from view. "Keep to the left and stay on the level ground and you will reach the angle of the first embankment. Beyond it is a stone wall. On our right lies the Jalapa road, but we can never reach there until the guns at the angle of the fort have been silenced."

"Tell Shields to follow me, and put him in the right direction," answered the brave Harney. He waved his sword and gave the order to advance.

The men of the 2d Infantry, who had been firing at long range at the fort, now jumped to their feet and joined in the concerted movement, and just as the cheer rose a gust of wind parted the battle-smoke, and there, straight ahead, for an instant appeared the Mexican flag fluttering

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and rippling above the white, deadly mist. No sooner had Harney disappeared than Brigadier-General Shields came up. A few words with Lee, and he was off, his officers shouting, "The bayonet! the bayonet! Don't fire! don't fire! Our own men are ahead!"

Screaming and roaring, they plunged over the broken ground. The Mexicans, although unprepared for the sudden onslaught, perceived, all at once, that their flank was threatened, and rushed men and guns to the angle at which Harney was endeavoring to direct his men. Keeping in his mind Lee's admonition about bearing to the left, Harney had gone too far in that direction, and was well down towards the end of his flanking company before he knew it. Imagining that the whole regiment was behind him, he did not stop when he reached the first earthwork and abatis that had been abandoned, but, stumbling over it and up the farther side, he found himself at the foot of the rough stone wall. It was but ten or twelve feet high, and the mortar had fallen away in the crevices. In his imagination Harney supposed himself to be surrounded by men in blue coats all eager to be the first inside the fort.

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Thrusting his sword-knot above his elbow, he climbed up the stones. He rose from his knees at last and stood on the very top, crying, "Come on! Come on!" His forage-cap, although held tight on his head by the strap beneath the chin, was torn to shreds, the visor crushed across his brow, while his tunic, that was open, was pierced by four balls. So close were some of the Mexican muskets that they almost set his clothing on fire. But he was unharmed! For an instant it appeared as if he stood there all alone, but, as if he commanded a brigade, he flourished his sword, and, seeing four or five blue-clad figures clamber up to the left and right of him, still shouting, "Come on! Come on!" he jumped down among the hordes below him. After him stumbled and slid not more than twenty infantrymen; but, as if they were a thousand, they dived into the mass of crowded and frightened Mexicans.

It was a fortunate thing that Lee had pressed on with Shields, for the bulk of Harney's men had kept too far to the right, and had run against the wall beyond the angle where the stone work was higher. So close was Shields that he and his

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men had heard Harney's cry, and, shouting, "We are coming! We are coming!" with Shields and a few officers a few strides ahead, they broke like a great wave and surged through the pit and up against the wall. Twiggs was again advancing, and Colonel Riley, at the head of his regiment, dashing along the new road, swept in on the rear of the castle. The cheer they gave sounded down the valley, and the officers on the hill known as El Telegrapho, where that strange mountain battery had been placed, saw through a chasm in the smoke the flags of three regiments toss across the grim stone walls while yet the Mexican flag was flying from above. But brave Shields had fallen, pierced through the lungs.

Scott, from below, had watched the final scene. Tears had filled his eyes. Almost at the same moment he had noticed a young officer, Lieutenant Patten, of the 2d Infantry, holding his shattered arm to his breast, but pushing on.

"Are you badly hurt, sir?" Scott asked.

The boy did not reply, for at that minute the cheer that told of victory came rolling down the hill.

"Look! look! Our men are in the intrench-

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ments, general!" he called, dropping his wounded arm and pointing.

Scott dug his spurs into his great charger, and plunged over the hard-fought ground up the hill.

The Mexicans were now in full retreat towards the town of Jalapa, with the American Dragoons hot after them. The day was won.

An impregnable walled city, Vera Cruz, had fallen by siege, and an unconquerable position, Cerro Gordo, had been taken by a combination of skill and daring in the short space of four weeks. The way lay straight before Scott, towards the enemy's capital.

But what of Lee, who had contributed so much to the success of the day? While the shots were still sounding out on the Jalapa road he had crawled into an empty casemate, and, with the relaxation of the moment falling over him like an opiate, he had gone fast asleep on the cold stone flagging.

XI

BLOODLESS VICTORIES

NOTHING could begin to describe the panic in which the Mexican army had fallen after their defeat at Cerro Gordo. All over the surrounding country the infantry and cavalry were scattered. The cavalry alone, to the number of three thousand, under General Ampudia, made some semblance of keeping military formation. But the foot-soldiers, with their spirits broken, dismayed, and utterly without *morale*, wandered along the highways or through the wastes of chaparral, many entirely destitute of arms, for they had cast everything aside in their mad rush for safety. Encampments of stragglers were to be seen scattered here and there in the mountain-passes. It had seemed to them as if they had been fighting men of more than flesh and blood. They wished no more of it.

General Patterson, who had led the advance

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and followed the enemy's retreat along the Jalapa road, halted on the night of the 18th at Encerro, and the next day entered Jalapa. In the afternoon General Worth's division followed them, and towards evening the commander-in-chief himself arrived with his staff.

Lee having slept for seven hours on the hard stones, arose as refreshed as if he had been reposing amid the downiest of pillows. But he was delighted to find himself in the saddle once again. His feet were still sore from the mountain-climbing that he had been doing for the past four days, for he had combined the work of scout, engineer, staff-officer, and infantry leader. As he rode forward a little ahead of the others, Scott turned to Colonel Garland, of the 2d Artillery, who had joined him on the road.

"Blood will tell, colonel," he said. "Look at Lee; there is a case of 'the son of his father.' 'Light Horse Harry,' if he should look down from the place where good men and good soldiers go, would be proud of his son to-day."

In a few words he recapitulated Lee's services, and Garland added a chapter that Scott had not heard in detail; for he told of seeing Lee on foot

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outstripping the younger men as he climbed the hill, of how, almost without pausing to take breath, he had led the infantrymen in that gallant charge on the frowning, stone-walled fortress.

"You will have to keep an eye on him, general," he concluded, "or he won't survive this campaign."

"I'd rather lose a brigade. But some men are like some horses," replied Scott, half laughing—"you have to give them their head or they will chafe beneath the curb."

On the 20th of the month the scouts brought back word that the way seemed clear towards the next pass, which was named La Hoya, but from Mexican accounts Scott had been informed that this mountain defile had been strongly fortified with earthworks and a battery of heavy guns. Lee was sent forward with General Worth's brigade and two batteries of siege-guns to superintend the placing of the artillery, for Scott hoped to shell the enemy out and thus avoid the severe loss of another desperate charge. As the troops came down the road and deployed on each side, the heavy guns were brought for-

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ward and halted at extreme range. The batteries could be seen half-way up the hill, flanking the highway, but there was not a sign of movement and no color that might mean an enemy's flag. It was a strange sight.

The general was watching through his field-glass anxiously, however, and expecting every moment to see the smoke come eddying up above the bare lines of hills, when Lee spoke quickly.

"We can save our ammunition, general," he said. "The place is abandoned!"

"Hold hard, Captain Lee; we had better try a shot," replied Worth, warningly.

"As you please, general," Lee replied. "But our friend, the enemy, has left us no work to do. A corporal and three men could take that place unaided."

The shot was never fired. In order to prove the truth of his assertion, Lee, with a few troopers, rode on up the road. Here was a remarkable state of affairs. Six heavy brass field-pieces and two old-fashioned iron guns frowned over the well-built intrenchments, but not a human being was there. A lone goat, with a couple of bleating kids, wandered among the guns, and

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scampered away up the hill as Worth's brigade marched in and took possession. On every side were little camp-fires, some still smouldering, where the Mexican troops had cooked their meals the night before. Everything bore evidence of a hasty evacuation. But not many miles along the highway was the fortress of Perote. No one expected that this would be abandoned also, but so, indeed, it proved to be; and with the same ease that they had entered La Hoya, Worth marched into the town. At the castle he found an old, brown-skinned man in a gaudy uniform who introduced himself as General Vasquez. With many bows and gesticulations he informed General Worth that he had been instructed to remain to conclude all the formalities of the surrender. He conducted, almost with an air of pride, Lee and General Worth over the fortifications. The Americans found themselves possessed of an amazing amount of war material, presented, as it were, to them with the compliments of the Mexican government. No less than fifty-four iron and bronze guns of various calibers and in excellent condition, twelve thousand cannon-balls, and over fourteen thousand

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bombs and hand-grenades, and five hundred good and serviceable muskets stacked in perfect order in the court-yard. The degree of consternation and despair into which the enemy had been plunged can best be shown by taking an extract from a letter found in the carriage of General Santa Anna, among his personal baggage which was taken at the same time: "If the enemy advance one step more," reads the postscript, "the national independence will be buried in the abyss of the past." To which Scott added, tersely, in quoting it, the following words, "We have taken that step."

From Perote, Scott sent his report to Washington, and in making reference to the military movements up to that date, and especially to the battle of Cerro Gordo, he wrote as follows:

"I am compelled to make special mention of the services of Captain R. E. Lee, Engineers. This officer greatly distinguished himself at the siege of Vera Cruz; was again indefatigable during these operations, in reconnoissance, as daring, as laborious, and of the utmost value; nor was he less conspicuous in planting batteries and in

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conducting columns to their station under the heavy fire of the enemy."

The American force present at the battle of Cerro Gordo, in action and reserve, was eight thousand five hundred men. The loss in the two days' fighting was thirty-three officers and three hundred and ninety-eight men, in all four hundred and thirty-one, of whom sixty-three were killed outright. The numbers of Mexicans were estimated at twelve thousand or more, and their losses in killed and wounded from one thousand to twelve hundred. Some three thousand prisoners, four or five thousand stands of arms, and forty-three pieces of bronze artillery, manufactured at Seville, in Spain, were taken.

It is pleasing to relate that the brave Shields had so far recovered from what was supposed to be a mortal wound as to be able to be brought on to Perote, and subsequently, though much weakened, he resumed his command.

A bitter disappointment to Scott and his officers came to him, announced through a letter that arrived on April 27th. It was that two thousand recruits that he expected were to be

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sent to join his army had suddenly, and without warning being given to him, been diverted to General Taylor. Besides, the term of enlistment of the volunteers was drawing to a close. Scott wisely concluded to send them back at once. And in a remarkable order, which he issued on May 4th, he complimented the volunteers upon their services, and announced his intention of discharging them. Then, after a consultation again with his "little cabinet," he wrote to Washington, expressing in a dignified manner his disappointment at not receiving the new levies promised him, and concluded with the following remarkable statement:

"I might, notwithstanding the unavoidable discharge of the old volunteers—seven regiments and two independent companies—advance with confidence upon the enemy's capital. I shall, nevertheless, advance, but whether beyond Puebla will depend upon intervening information and reflection."

Surrounded by such an army, officered by men in whom he placed the utmost confidence, no

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wonder Scott felt that he could go forward. But yet it was a wonderful thing to do. The danger of being cut off from his base of supplies increased with every mile he marched. But his spirit was undaunted. On May 8th the forward movement began again, and on the 14th the army, having passed through the town of Amazoque, came into sight of Puebla, that at one time had been the second city of importance in Mexico. A messenger had been sent forward to request the surrender of the town from the mayor, and the troops were engaged in furbishing up their arms and accoutrements in order to make a more imposing effect upon the inhabitants, when a drummer-boy who had strayed ahead of the advance-guard suddenly came running back with the news that the enemy was approaching. The staff of officers, among whom was Lee, immediately rode forward. Sure enough, about two miles ahead a large body of mounted men could be seen approaching through a defile in the hills—lancers, in brilliant uniforms, and dragoons; whether it was the whole force of the enemy or not, it was hard to determine. Colonel Garland's artillery was hurried forward by Lee,

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and a few discharges of grape and shell disconcerted the Mexican horsemen, and, without even forming for the charge, they disappeared helter-skelter into the hills. In a drenching down-pour of rain that rather destroyed the effect of its military appearance, the army marched into Puebla. Even at the risk of digressing a little from following our hero's personal doings, it might be well to introduce here a description from a Mexican stand-point of the appearance of the little army to whose success his own doings had contributed so largely:

“The singular appearance of the American soldiers, their trains, their artillery, their large horses, all attracted the curiosity of the multitude, and an immense crowd surrounded the new conquerors. The latter, extremely fatigued, confiding in the mutual guarantee stipulated by the ayuntamiento (the city council) and General Worth, or, perhaps, despising the people who so easily permitted the occupation of their territory, stacked arms in the plaza while waiting for quarters, while some wandered into neighboring streets.”

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Another native of the place wrote in a letter that appeared in the columns of the *London Times*:

“Nor does their armament seem to me anything extraordinary. In a word, except the draught-horses, which are very good, I assure you, without exaggeration, that these men bring nothing that we have not seen a thousand times. Even the immense number of their wagons is not a proof of large stores. The wagons are all empty, and I understood the principal ones to be for the transport of troops. How, then, have they done what they have? How have they continually beaten our army, which not only surpasses them in appearance—for that is unquestionable—but, in my opinion, has real and positive advantages over them? Every one asks this question, to which there is but one reply. Their leaders, and particularly the colonels of regiments, are old, gray-haired men.”

No matter what might have been their appearance, Scott's little army of less than eight thousand men slept peacefully that night, surrounded by thousands of their foes.

XII

ON TOWARDS MEXICO

IT was August. The American forces were still at the city of Puebla. The three months that had passed had not been idle ones. Reinforcements of troops and stores of supplies and ammunition had, after long delay, reached the waiting army, that now numbered nearly fourteen thousand men, but of these more than fifteen hundred were invalided, and the same number had been detailed to constitute a garrison under the command of Colonel Childs. On the 7th of the month the cavalry, with which was Lee, took up its march along the road to the valley of Mexico. On the three following days Scott quickly followed with the three other divisions. Passing over the beautiful, rolling country, that abounded in fields and gardens, filled with a profusion of fruits and vegetables, the Americans pressed on, climbing higher and high-

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er through wide-spreading uplands above them. They crossed through the last mountain-pass of Rio Frio unopposed, and there burst upon their sight the grand, well-watered valley in which lay the capital city.

As Captain Lee sat upon his horse and looked down on the wonderful sight, from his position on a little hill to the side of the road, he could see the snow-capped summit of the lofty mountains rising through the mists, and before him, stretching far as the eye could see, mountain and valley, lake and river, wood and grove, hamlet and city, in a blaze of color like a fairy landscape. As each regiment marched through the defile and caught the sight, they burst into cheers. It was like a view of the promised land. They felt as Cortez and his men might well have felt over two hundred years before. Their hearts lifted within them, as the hearts of the Crusaders must have leaped when first their eyes fell upon Jerusalem. Little did they think that half a dozen bloody battles were before them, and that it would be long weeks before they would finally enter the city they had so long ago started to reach.

A strange little note might here be mentioned.

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The great Duke of Wellington had followed closely, in far-off England, by letter, the march of the invading army into Mexico, tracing its every movement upon a large map. When he was informed that the Americans had passed Rio Frio into the basin of Mexico, he said, "Scott is lost. He has been carried away by his successes. He cannot take the city and he cannot fall back upon his base."

In order that the situation of the army might now be better understood, it would not be amiss to give a short description of the country in which, within the next few days, so many actions were to be fought. The difficulties of the military movements might be better understood also if we look for a moment at the geographical surroundings.

The valley of Mexico lies in a table-land at an elevation of nearly seven thousand feet, and is about half-way between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. It occupies a basin extending from north to south fifty-two miles, and in width, from east to west, thirty-four. Measuring along the crest of the towering mountains that surround it, it is slightly over two hundred in cir-

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cumference. Here enclosed are seventeen hundred and ten square miles, one-tenth of which is taken up by five good-sized lakes, the largest of which, Lake Tezcuco, is in the centre and is seventy-seven square miles in extent. Like Lake Chalco, farther south, it is fresh water, the others being saltish or brackish to the taste. It is not a smooth plain, but abounds in irregularly shaped rocks of volcanic origin, and is filled with numerous little hills and valleys. To the westward it is fertile as a garden, crowded with towns and villages and fields of wheat and other grain.

Into this great basin the advanced division, under the brave General Twiggs, descended, and, unopposed, they moved along the well-built national road to a place called Ayotla, about sixteen miles from the capital. There they waited for the remainder of the army.

No sooner did Scott arrive than he called a council of war. Lee, with several other officers, was ordered to attend the general. On a rough table in a bare, mud-plastered room of a little hacienda, or small farm-house, a big map was spread out, and over it there was much discussion.

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“There seem to be three routes by which we can approach the city, gentlemen,” remarked the old commander. “One by the road along which we have advanced so far successfully, that passes south of the big lake, to the eastern gate of the city, and the second to the west of Lake Chalco and near this other one with the unpronounceable name. By this means we can enter the capital from the south. The third appears to be by the Toluca highway on the west. The ground there seems to be soft and marshy.”

“I should advise sticking to the main road, general,” suggested one of his staff, a man who was always in favor of frontal attacks, and a believer in the bayonet.

“But how about the fortress of El Peñon that we have heard so much about?” interposed another.

“We will have to ask Captain Lee about that,” General Scott rejoined. “I believe he has certain information that might determine our course of action. He has just returned from an all-night reconnoissance of the position.”

Lee had made some report but a few minutes

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previous to the meeting, to the general, and it was his modesty that had kept him from interposing his opinion until it was asked.

"You went in that direction, Captain Lee?" Scott went on, propounding the question in the legal manner that he sometimes assumed, for Scott in his early life had been a lawyer.

"Yes, sir."

"How far did you go, sir?"

"To the walls of the fortress, general."

"Can you describe its position?"

All eyes were turned upon the engineer as he replied, quietly leaving out, altogether, the personal danger that he must have passed through in gaining this information. In a few words he told of the situation of the fortress — how it overhung the narrow causeway, on one side a deep ditch and on the other the rugged shores of the lake. He hastily sketched the appearance of the place, and estimated the number of guns and the probable number of defenders. But he said little of how he had crawled up the hill and actually passed through the lines of Mexican sentries, of how he swam the muddy ditch, and, having completely passed around the fortress,

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waded out into the lake until the water was well above his shoulders, and, taking advantage of the blinding rain-storm, made his way down the national road, nearly walking into a Mexican outpost in the darkness, and at last, tired and soaked to the skin, had reached his own lines again. He had shifted into dry clothes but a few minutes before the council of war. When he had finished, Scott spoke as follows:

“From what Captain Lee has told us, and from an opinion he expressed to me when he first returned from this, the boldest reconnoissance of the war, I am of opinion that El Peñon might be carried, but at a great, and to all purposes, disproportionate loss of life.

“I am,” added the general, “most anxious to spare the lives of this gallant army. There will be, beyond doubt, a hard battle, which we will have to win before we capture the city and attain, what is the great object of this campaign, a just and honorable peace.” As soon as the council of war was adjourned, Lee and Scott held another long consultation, and another reconnoissance was suggested to the left of El Peñon, and this having been accomplished by a bold,

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daylight survey, a circuitous march was determined upon, leaving the national road and passing to the south of Lake Chalco. The order of the march was now reversed, and General Worth, who was in the rear, led the advance with his division. Over the rugged mountain-spurs and by broken and narrow causeways, along the marshy borders of the lake, Worth's division pressed ahead. And although a small party might have greatly embarrassed its movements, only once was any opposition met with, and in two days the Americans, having crossed over ground whose difficulties the enemy believed to be insurmountable, reached San Augustine on the Acapulco road, nine miles from the walls of Mexico. By August 18th all the divisions had assembled there.

In the capital, as it afterwards developed, everything was terror and confusion. Santa Anna had now gathered in the fortifications, close to the city, an army of over thirty-five thousand men. Word reached the waiting Americans that the shops had been closed and all the male inhabitants had been turned for the nonce into soldiers. The appearance of Scott's army, from

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a totally unexpected direction, had caused the Mexicans' spirits to sink to the lowest ebb, however, and it is on record that Santa Anna was considering at this time the idea of entering into negotiations for the surrender of the city, but his plans were mistrusted, and Scott boldly withdrew consent to all parleying and determined to pursue the campaign with unabated energy. And this brings us to the battle of Contreras, on August 19th, when once more the commander-in-chief had opportunity to mention Captain Lee in his despatches.

XIII

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THE American army now found itself in a position that was not only uncomfortable but, to a certain extent, perilous. The forces directly south of the city were divided, the conditions presented by the lay of the land hindered all but movements in certain fixed directions. The country was broken by fields of volcanic rock and rough lava-beds impossible for the movement of artillery, and in other places the only roads were surrounded by low swamps and marshy ground traversed by ditches filled shoulder-deep with water.

General Valencia, the Mexican second in command, instead of falling back, as Santa Anna had ordered him, had practically, by a sudden movement, cut the American army in two. He had advanced nearly three miles and had intrenched

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his force beyond the village of Contreras, upon the slope of a steep hill.

The broken and rocky ground, that was known as El Pedregal, prevented the co-operation of the two main divisions of the American army; for a time they were out of touch entirely. By a daring reconnoissance Captain Lee had determined that the Mexican works at San Antonio could only be approached in front by a narrow causeway that was flanked on either side by deep ditches. It would have been almost madness for General Worth, who was in command of the second division, to attack or advance. Under Lee's advice he was ordered by General Scott to make a feint upon the place and to hold the enemy there in suspense in order to mask any future movements that might be made. It would never do to risk a battle at San Antonio and leave Valencia free to fall upon the American flank and rear from the direction of Contreras.

The indefatigable Lee was again sent for, and with his able assistants, Lieutenants Beauregard and Towers, he was ordered to make a survey of El Pedregal, that the Mexicans considered im-

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possible for the passage of troops. Lee, at the head of the reconnoitring party, set out, escorted by a battalion of picked infantry and a troop of horse. It took almost two hours to gain the top of the first plateau; most of the way the horses had to be led up a narrow mule-path, and the infantry, stumbling along behind, were with difficulty kept in anything like military formation. Lee and Beauregard, pressing on ahead, halted for a minute to discuss the best method of procedure. Beauregard was much depressed and showed plainly his bitter disappointment.

"It is impossible, Captain Lee," he declared. "It would take a week of hard work to make a road, and we cannot spare the time nor the men."

Lee replied nothing. True enough, the march so far had been disheartening. To move artillery up that rough path was out of the question; but where men had gone already other men could follow, and Lee was not accustomed to make up his mind until he had looked on both sides of things. Pointing out a broken ridge in front, he spoke quickly.

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"There is the key of the situation," he declared. "If the Mexicans hold that ridge they can sweep aside any working party that may gain the plateau. What lies beyond it we must find out."

"It is held already," cried Beauregard, suddenly. "It is held already."

Sure enough, there was a mounted figure standing outlined against the sky, and, just as they saw him, the rider whirled his horse and disappeared behind the rocks. Lee turned. It was a quick decision he had to make. From the man's movements he determined that the rider was alone and probably a scout, or member of one of the guerilla bands that had so often harassed the flanks and the rear of the army on the march. There were some forty of the American troopers mounted on their horses, under the command of a young lieutenant within sound of Lee's voice. The infantry were appearing, tired and almost overcome by their hard climb over the sun-baked rock, and were in no condition for a charge at the double-quick. Lee did not hesitate. Calling upon the horsemen to follow him he put his own steed to the gallop, and clattering

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over the lava-beds the little band made straight for the ridge. It was good they arrived just when they did, otherwise the reconnoissance would have progressed no farther that day. As they reached the highest point they saw before them a stretch of perhaps three-quarters of a mile, fairly level, and broken only here and there by great bowlders of volcanic rock. Beyond rose a high hill with a cone-shaped top, and at its base was a body of mounted men. The fluttering pennants of their lances showed that they were no guerilla band, but regular Mexican cavalry. They perhaps outnumbered the American troopers two to one. Just as Lee saw them they formed in line and swept onward at a gallop, heading straight for the ridge.

Looking back quickly over his shoulder, Lee perceived that the Mexicans would be upon him long before the infantry could be near enough to render him the least assistance. Again it was a time for an instantaneous decision. The troopers, armed only with horse-pistols and sabres, could never hope to hold the ridge alone. It was an axiom in the old days of cutting, slashing charges, that no body of mounted troops should

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receive the onslaught of another body of horsemen at a stand-still. No matter the odds opposed to them, they must ride forward at top speed to meet them. Moving force must meet moving force. Whipping out his sword, Lee called to the troopers to follow, and before the Mexicans had covered half the distance the Americans were speeding towards them. They met almost in the centre of the plain, and through the Mexican lines the heavy northern horses ploughed, bowling over the light mounts of the lancers and splitting their force in two. They whirled again, and for a few minutes pistol-shots rang and there was great sabre play. Then what was left of the enemy put spurs to their steeds and dispersed in all directions. When the infantry gained the ridge the fight was over. Lee was returning with five prisoners, including a lieutenant-colonel; thirteen of the enemy had been killed or wounded, while his own loss was one man killed and three slightly hurt. In half an hour the bold little company reached the foot of the conical hill that was called Zacatepec, and there dismounting, Beauregard, Towers, and Lee made their way to the top. From here it

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was possible to make a quick survey of the rocky plateau.

Picking out five of the best-mounted troopers and leaving Towers in command of the rest, Lee and Beauregard kept on farther to the south, until they were actually on the edge of El Pedregal and could look down upon the Mexican position at Contreras. Having successfully retraced their steps, they joined the command at the hill, and leaving some of the infantry to hold it and the rest to go back for water, Lee immediately set out alone and reached Scott at San Augustin. Scott relied upon his judgment entirely, and followed Lee's plans to the letter, which were, in short, to build a road from El Pedregal, advance upon Contreras, engage General Valencia's forces there, and also by this move and keeping to the high ground, turn the Mexican position at San Antonio, and gain the rear of the forces that were so difficult to approach from in front. Again was Lee to perform an almost superhuman feat of endurance, for not only did he superintend the making of the road, but he guided the divisions of Pillow and Twiggs across the lava-beds, and although

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the Mexican guns opened upon them at long range, by evening they were in position.

The troops, galled and harassed by the Mexican artillery, were anxious to fight at once. But the enemy had every advantage in numbers and position, and Lee urged Generals Pillow and Twiggs to wait for reinforcements, and, after the skirmish that took place on the evening of the 19th, the truth of his reasoning was carefully proved, for Pillow and Twiggs found themselves unable to do more than hold their ground after having advanced in the zone of the Mexican fire. Lee, to whom Scott had intrusted almost the whole army, stated his purpose of returning to headquarters at San Augustin in order to make a personal report of the condition of affairs. Alone and unattended in the pitch darkness he set out about nine o'clock in the evening. It was raining in torrents, great gashes of lightning rent the sky, and every gulley was a roaring stream. Yet not once did he lose either his courage or his sense of direction; for miles he led his tired horse by the bridle, stumbling over the rocks and fissures, and by twelve o'clock he heard the welcome hail of an American sentry. In a

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few minutes the commander-in-chief, aroused from his slumbers, was told that Major Lee (for Lee had been brevetted major since the battle of Cerro Gordo) was waiting. So glad was Scott to see him that he almost took him in his arms.

By candle-light Lee sketched the whole position and outlined the plan that was adopted for the following day. Of this night's journey Scott wrote afterwards that it was the greatest feat of physical and moral courage performed by any individual during the campaign. When the conference was over—and it lasted nearly two hours—Scott accompanied Lee to the door of the little adobe house that he had taken for his headquarters. To the surprise of both of them the clouds had cleared away, and it was a bright, starlit night, and nothing but the muddy condition of the road told of the great storm that had passed.

“General,” said Lee, “I urge haste in moving up troops to help Generals Pillow and Twiggs. It is the most important thing.” He glanced up at the sky above him. “It is light enough to see, and will hold clear till the morning. They should start at once.”

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“But how?” asked Scott. “No one but you knows the way—don’t deny it, sir, you’re almost dead from fatigue at the present moment.”

Lee turned his pale face, worn with weariness and lack of sleep, to the general and smiled.

“I’ll take them, sir,” he said. “Have no fear for me, and every moment counts. Send orders to the brigade commanders, and we will arrive by daylight.”

Almost reluctantly, Scott returned to the room and scribbled a hasty order. Inside of an hour three thousand men, led by the tired engineer, were on their way to join the dismal bivouac of the troops of Twiggs and Pillow, who all night long had listened, as they lay on the soaked and muddy ground, to the cheers and music coming from the town opposite their position, where General Valencia and his staff were leading the rejoicing, for the Mexicans supposed that they had won a great victory the evening before, and were but waiting for daylight to complete it and drive back the invaders. There is hardly time to go into the doings of August 20th, but the general assault began shortly after daylight, and the astonished Mexicans, dismayed again by the un-

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expected movements of their antagonist, were thrown into confusion and fled.

Lee got no sleep until that night. He had participated in the great charge of General Cadwallader's brigade, and had led the brilliant movement of Colonel Ransom's troops that, acting independently, had crossed a deep ravine under a heavy fire and turned the enemy's flank.

In Scott's report of the action, he has given such a complete résumé of the doings on the 19th and 20th that it is well to quote it as it stands:

"I doubt whether a more brilliant or decisive victory—taking into view the ground, artificial defences, batteries, and the extreme disparity of numbers, without cavalry or artillery on our side—is to be found on record. Including all our corps directed against the intrenched camp, with Shields's brigade at the hamlet, we positively did not number over four thousand five hundred rank and file; and we knew by sight, and since more certainly, by many captured documents and letters, that the enemy had actually engaged on the spot seven thousand men, with at

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least twelve thousand more hovering within sight and striking distance, both on the 19th and 20th. All not killed or captured now fled with precipitation.

“Thus was the great victory of Contreras achieved: one road to the capital opened; seven hundred of the enemy killed; eight hundred and thirteen prisoners, including, among eighty-eight officers, four generals; besides many colors and standards; twenty-two pieces of brass ordnance, half of large caliber; thousands of small arms and accoutrements; an immense quantity of shot, shells, powder, and cartridges; seven hundred pack-mules, many horses, etc., all in our hands.”

This victory made untenable the position of Santa Anna at San Antonio, a fact that at first the Mexicans did not realize. The next day was fought what might be considered two separate actions—one with the forces of Santa Anna that remained at San Antonio and on the road beyond it, and the second at the town of Churubusco, that was well situated for defence, as was amply proved by the losses the little American

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army sustained. It made Lee's third day of fighting, and this day he found himself playing the part of an artilleryman, bringing up and placing the howitzer battery that was hurried to the support of the brigades of Pierce and Shields, and at the same time attending to his staff duties by keeping the commander-in-chief informed as to the movements of the enemy's cavalry. Following close upon the victory of the day before, that at Churubusco almost completed the Mexican demoralization.

The fierceness of the combat can best be told by glancing at the official return of killed and wounded. On the American side the losses and casualties amounted to one thousand one hundred and fifty, besides the officers; the Mexicans lost approximately four thousand. General Santa Anna, in making his report of these two days, stated that in killed, wounded, and missing he had lost twelve thousand men. On the 19th his army was nearly thirty thousand. The morning of the 21st it numbered but eighteen thousand men.

The battle of Churubusco was one of the most furious and deadly for its length of any battle of

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the war. General Scott might have entered the city of Mexico that night, but for reasons of his own, which no doubt were wise, he concluded not to do so, and camped on the battle-field he had won, which was about four miles from the gates of the city.

With the American army at this time was Mr. Trist, a man who had been sent out as special commissioner of the United States to negotiate terms of peace, etc., with Mexico when the time should arrive. His position was a peculiar one, his presence was unnecessary and due entirely to politics, and although he afterwards shared in some of the misfortunes that befell Scott, the mere fact that the general had to take him into his councils was galling in the extreme. Trist now counselled waiting before further military moves were made, in order to open negotiations if possible. He was acting under the advice of some friendly Mexicans who claimed to know well the temper of the people at large. So Scott curbed the ardor of his troops, and for two weeks waited anxiously for results. It would have been better for him if he had entered the city on August 20th, for now two bloody battles lay be-

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fore him, and Santa Anna had mustered an army of fourteen thousand men and determined to resist the advance of the Americans at all hazards. On September 8th was fought the battle of Molino del Rey, the bloodiest of the campaign. Nearly one-third of the American officers engaged were either killed or wounded. Of the rank and file, over seven hundred were killed, wounded, and missing. The Mexicans on their side lost upward of two thousand men. It would be hard to describe, in short, the doings of that day. Artillery was used by the Americans almost in the place of infantry, guns were advanced by hand, trundled up to almost point-blank range; and there is a story told of one battery that had every gunner shot away from it and yet still kept up its steady fire; for Captain Drum had called for volunteers, and as there were no artillerists left, every man at the gun was a West Point officer. The Mexicans fought bravely in the trenches, and in the breaches in the walls that were made by the solid shot from the American guns, and yet, when the sun went down, Scott, although victorious, knew that before him was a still greater task—the taking of



ASSAULT OF THE VOLUNTEER STORMING PARTY AT CHAPULTEPEC



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the castle of Chapultepec, that was the key to the defences of the city.

For three days the American army did little but rest, but on the 11th a strategic movement was commenced that worked most successfully. While Chapultepec remained in possession of the enemy the city of Mexico could not be held by the invading army, and upon the fall of the fortress depended the whole success of the campaign. A feint was made by Twiggs against the southern gate in daylight on the 11th, but as soon as night fell all hands were at work with pick and shovel constructing batteries immediately opposite Chapultepec. These batteries were traced by Captain Huger and Major Lee, and constructed by them with the able assistance of the young officers of the Engineer Corps. The recent numerous captures of artillery had more than trebled the American force in guns, and also had given them all the ammunition necessary for a heavy and continuous bombardment, which began early on the morning of the 12th; but the great thing done at the battle of Chapultepec, and that will always be remembered, was the assault of the volunteer storming party of

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some two hundred and fifty officers and men that rushed forward carrying scaling-ladders, and in the face of an awful and murderous fire gained a lodgment inside an angle of the fort and held it until reinforcements could be brought to their assistance. Lee had started with this gallant little band when it first rushed out from under the protection of the American batteries. His tired brain and body (again he had gone more than forty-eight hours without rest) refused to combine, and he fell fainting before he had gone half the distance. It was not until they picked him up that the doctors discovered that he was also suffering from a slight wound, and that his arm and shoulder were covered with blood. He had not reported it, and had considered it of little moment, for the ball had only lodged in the muscles and worked itself out of its own accord.

There were so many individual deeds of bravery done this day, and so many men won honor and distinction for personal gallantry, that it would take a long list to relate them. And the next day also there was much hard fighting, and many brave young lives were lost. Among

FOUR BATTLES

them Lee's great friends, Captain Drum and Lieutenant Benjamin.

On the 14th, at four o'clock in the morning, a deputation waited upon Scott, coming from the city of Mexico, and informing him that the federal government had fled with the army.

A wonderful sight it must have been to see that little band of five thousand heroes enter the great plaza of the city, with thousands upon thousands of their enemies watching their quiet but triumphal entry. There was some fighting from the house-tops, but no very determined resistance, and then within three days peace settled down, people began to return to their homes, shops were opened, and business once more went on as usual. Lee found time to make up for some of his lost slumber and to write several long and interesting letters home to his friends and children.

XIV

THE CAPTURED CAPITAL

IT was the captured capital. Across the square, blazing in the heat of the sun, stepped a group of young officers heading for the palace gates. They were laughing and joking together, and evidently they were in great good-humor. It seemed hard to suppose that only a few weeks before these same young fellows had passed through flame and fire and faced death in many shapes to reach their goal. Now their only thought was getting away. It was October. How much longer they would have to stay they did not know, but home was what they talked about and dreamed of. One of the younger officers was strolling along with his hands thrust deep in his trousers-pocket and his tunic opened. His boots and even his shoulders and cap were covered with a film of gray dust.

“Better go and shift into your other uniform,

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Grant," suggested one of the young men whom we recognize as Lieutenant McClellan.

"The general won't be there, and I've just come from a long ride," was the response. "I think they will pardon me."

"You mean that you will risk it at any rate," put in another. "But, mind you, Colonel Lee is as much a stickler for the proprieties as the general himself."

"Is Colonel Lee going to be there?" asked the one addressed as Grant, suddenly.

"He's presiding officer," said the one who had first spoken. "I'd rather get a blow-out from the old gentleman than a reproving look from him."

"So would I," replied young Grant; "but it's too late now. I'll have to risk it."

He buttoned up his tunic and made some attempt at straightening his attire as he entered the room in the office of the city administration building where Colonel Robert E. Lee was sitting. Yes, he was colonel now; he had received three promotions for bravery on the field and usefulness in council. It was a strange thing with him that, once away from the excitement and danger

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of conflict, Lee could so suddenly drop into the careful and painstaking engineer, self-exacting and studiously conscientious; but he was observant of the conduct of others, also, and was ready to give praise where praise was due, and to be outspoken if occasion demanded it.

It was not exactly a court-martial that the young officers were going to attend—merely a court of inquiry that General Scott wished to hold. He had intrusted Lee with the rather disagreeable duty of reproving some of the younger men for some slight laxity of military duty. Lee's words were short and his questions were few, but yet not one of the subalterns left the room without having felt that peculiar impression that a stern but a just mind makes upon others when exercising the prerogative of rank and office in offering reproof or censure.

Before Grant had left, Lee called to him and quietly spoke to him in an aside.

"Mr. Grant," said he, "I should like to call your attention to the fact that an officer's dress should, so far as is possible, be consistent with the duty that he assumes. In the field and in

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active service, concessions have to be made, and exigencies often arrive that govern not only our actions but also influence our appearances. However, at such a meeting as this, when practically in barracks, there is no excuse for untidiness and carelessness—I wish to call your attention to regulations. That is all, sir; you may go.”

Young Lieutenant Grant saluted and left the room. Years afterwards the memory of these words came to him perhaps at a certain moment, of which we shall tell later in the story. Grant, once when speaking of Lee with admiration, praising his qualities both as a man and as a soldier, referred to him as “austere.” Lee was not austere. He had that dignity that comes of exactness of life—he made no slovenly or faulty strokes with pen or sword, and yet he never gave out the idea of self-repression. He was spontaneous and natural in the enjoyment of his pleasures and in the expression of his sympathies. All of his letters at this time showed (now that the actual fighting was over) that his one desire was to return home and to see the family from which he had so long been separated. But the grati-

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fication of this wish was long deferred. Weeks ran on into months, and every moment of his busy life was filled with detail work.

It would take too much time and too much space to describe the condition of affairs in the city of Mexico and at home in the United States just at this period. General Scott had many enemies, both in the army and in political circles. There was not only jealousy, but party feeling involved, and many bitter moments did the conqueror of Mexico endure, and not always in silence. He kept his own council generally and asked for no sympathy from those about him; yet, at the same time, occasionally his temper got the better of him. But he never showed, even at this time, anything but kindly gentleness towards Lee. As had been proved time and again (and was to be shown before long in a strangely dramatic manner), Scott had almost the affection of a father or elder brother for his assistant chief of engineers. They were both Virginians; neither believed in slavery; and, while Scott did not have Lee's deeply religious temperament, they thought alike upon many subjects. Lee was always loyal to his friends,

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and in him General Scott found a champion at a time when he needed one.

This is rather a long digression, yet it is necessary, in view of what happened within a few short years after the Mexican War was over, to explain the close friendship that existed between the son of Light Horse Harry and the hero of Lundy's Lane.

It was said by those who were jealous of him, that Scott usually assumed the credit for everything that he possibly could, but no general in despatches ever did more justice to a subordinate than Scott did to Lee, and, if the truth be told, to all his officers.

The bitter disappointments of receiving no answers to numerous communications and requests that he had addressed to the home government no doubt embittered General Scott's temper, and the discontent among the rank and file at their enforced stay in Mexico became more pronounced; yet with Lee he had no trouble. In him Scott found only a conscientious and faithful subordinate, anxious to relieve him as much as possible of the worries of his position.

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Scott wrote of these troublesome and exacting times as follows:

“The war of masses ended with the capture of the enemy’s capital. The war of detail, including the occupation of the country and the collection of revenue, requires a large additional force.”

In fact, that task was actually harder than marching and fighting. There were innumerable little skirmishes with the predatory bands of guerrilleros out in the mountains; the city, however, was as quiet and as well ordered as if war had never been in the vicinity. But the army had to be supported and the country governed at the same time. At last the celebrated treaty of peace was signed on February 2, 1848, between Mexico and the United States, and on the 18th Scott turned over the command of the army to Major-General Butler, and soon afterwards returned home to the United States. Lee did not leave until May. It was a time when everybody who had a connection with the war was thinking of rewards and emoluments, but

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Lee had neither complaints on his own account nor ambitions further than those of carrying out his duties to the best of his abilities. His thoughts were more for others than for himself. Just before he left Mexico he expressed himself strongly upon the subject of Scott's having to suffer the ignominy of appearing before a court-martial, for it was true that, owing to the treatment of one of his subordinates who had great political power, the hero of one of the most remarkable campaigns of all history was compelled to answer charges which were subsequently found to have no foundation other than in the slanderous tales that emanated from his political and military enemies.

"I have nothing to fear for General Scott," wrote Lee, "if the whole truth be known, though the whole country will have suffered by his suspension." Then going on to speak of Scott's skill and science that had crushed the enemy and conquered a peace, Lee also gives praise to many others, and adds these words: "I hope my friends will give themselves no annoyance on my account, or any concern about the distribution of favors. I know how these things are

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rewarded at Washington, and how the President will be besieged by clamorous claimants. I do not wish to be numbered among them. Such as he can conscientiously bestow I should gratefully receive, and have no doubt that they will exceed my deserts."

Whether these rewards were commensurate with his services it is not for us to judge, but the value of what he had performed (in the doing of what he only considered as his duty) was recognized by every officer who lived through the campaign. After his return to the United States, General Scott, with almost a prophecy on his lips, spoke as follows:

"The success of the army in Mexico was largely due to the skill, valor, and undaunted courage of Robert E. Lee," and he stated as positively his belief that Lee was "the greatest military genius in America, and if the opportunity offered he would show himself to be the foremost captain of his time."

XV

GATHERING CLOUDS

IT was the autumn of 1859. Lee was once more at Arlington. The years since the Mexican War had been passed in strict attention to his military duties, with which he had allowed no side issues to interfere. Immediately after his return to the States, in 1848, he had been employed on the defences being constructed at Baltimore. He had refused the leadership of the Cuban insurrection, offered him by the republican junta, and he had declined also, at first, the offer of the superintendency of the Military Academy at West Point, in 1852. But so convinced were the authorities of the necessity of improving the general condition then existing at the Academy, and so firm was their belief in Lee's abilities, that they insisted upon his reconsidering his decision, and he accepted at last with reluctance. His administration was marked

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by an improvement in discipline and by the lengthening of the course to five years. While he was at the Academy he had seen his son, Custis, graduate at the head of his class, and his feelings of pride may well be imagined.

In 1855 he had been promoted regularly to be lieutenant-colonel of the 2d Cavalry. The year 1856 found him in western Texas with his regiment, where he served during the Comanche Indian troubles; and he brought about an important meeting which helped to settle matters, with Catumseh, a very troublesome chieftain.

It had been a sad home-coming to Arlington in the fall of 1859; for his father-in-law, Mr. Custis, the grandson of Martha Washington and the adopted son of General Washington, had died at the age of seventy-five, and the family circle was again broken.

Lee was seated on the broad piazza looking out at the river. Across his knees was spread a copy of a Washington paper. He had just finished reading an editorial that had given him much to think about, and his face was sad as he thought, for before him he saw a long vista of trouble and distress. Politically the country

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was bitterly divided. The question of slavery had been brought so strongly before the minds of the people that they were almost ready to take up arms. The Abolitionists of the North were as rampant in their expressions as the majority of the people of the South were obstinate in their refusal to listen to argument. Lee was not a believer in slavery. His own father had, shortly after the Revolutionary War, written against it at some length, and had described it as "that dreadful evil" which he prophesied would some day rend the country, regretting at the same time that a provision had not been introduced into the Constitution providing gradually for its abolition. Robert E. Lee now saw the warning and wisdom of his father's writing more plainly than he ever had before. A certain radical element of the extreme Abolitionist party was almost openly encouraging the blacks to insurrection. The frightful consequences of this act seemed to have escaped them. John Brown, from Kansas, the half-fanatical pioneer, was in Virginia with his band of followers. The government could not ignore their presence.

The people of the South were demanding their

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apprehension, and in the paper that Lee had just been reading there was an imperious summons to the authorities to act at once. As he sat there, his mind reaching far into the future and gaining little comfort, Mrs. Lee came from the house and approached him softly.

"A soldier has just ridden out from Washington with this," she said, handing him a long, blue, departmental envelope. "I hoped they would let you rest awhile, but it seems they will not."

Colonel Lee looked up with a smile that ended with a sigh. He opened the envelope, read the order it contained, and handed it to his wife with a long-drawn breath.

"I expected this," he said. "I am ordered to take command of a detachment of marines that is to proceed to Harper's Ferry, where John Brown and his followers have intrenched themselves. I see, far beyond this movement, trouble and distress. God grant it will be averted! God grant it so! But I must go at once."

With a hasty farewell he mounted his horse that had been waiting back of the house, and in a few minutes he was on his way to Washington.

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It was by no means an easy task that lay before Colonel Lee. The work required a cool head, experience, and courage; and it was because the authorities knew that Lee possessed these qualifications that they had chosen him. John Brown, with some twenty followers, had occupied Harper's Ferry on the 16th, and for three days had held possession of a group of brick buildings near the bank of the river. The State of Virginia, having called out two companies of militia, was preparing to call out all her citizens to resist invasion, and was ready to declare that a state of war existed. On the 17th, Brown, who had seized the arsenal and armory, had fought a pitched battle with the Virginia militia, in which he had lost most of his men, had two of his sons killed, and he himself had been badly wounded. He had with him at the time a number of citizens whom he had taken prisoners and now held as hostages. When Lee arrived on the 19th with his battalion of marines from the navy-yard at Washington he found Brown barricaded in the engine-house that was surrounded by five or six hundred Virginians and militia, all demanding vengeance against the invader.

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They did not much relish the presence of the regular troops, for they feared that Brown might be rescued, and they had determined that he should receive short shrift. Lee took in the situation at once. His orders had been to capture Brown, dead or alive, but to take him alive if possible. With him at the time was Lieutenant J. E. B. Stuart, of the 1st Cavalry, whom he had met in Arlington while he was on leave of absence. The young officer had asked permission to accompany Lee as a volunteer aide.

When the marines marched into the little village, Lee found the Virginians about to make an onslaught on the engine-house. He at once asserted his right to take command, and stated that the affair was no longer in the hands of Virginia, but in the hands of the federal authorities; that he had his orders, and should carry them out. It was a critical moment. A clash then between the State forces and those representing the national government might have borne dire consequences. The people, afraid that Brown and his companions would be taken from them, did not like to give up their hope of wreaking immediate vengeance; but Lee was

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firm; he would brook no interference. A plan of attack was quickly arranged, and the marines, some armed with axes and crowbars, were divided into three detachments, and at a given signal they rushed upon the engine-house and battered down the doors. There was a short, fierce fight at the entrance, and then they swarmed through, young Lieutenant Stuart at their head. Immediately he recognized a tall figure with a great, waving mass of iron-gray hair towering up from a broad, high forehead. A marine was drawing back a bayonet at the old man's breast when Stuart caught his shoulder. An instant later John Brown was a prisoner.

The Virginians, who had watched the scene as idle spectators, now rushed down from all sides about the little band of blue-coated marines. Furious cries and imprecations arose. Loud were the demands to hang Brown at once. The task of capturing him appeared an easy one beside that of saving his life. Lee needed now all his coolness; and with that rare gift of his of impressing others, his men caught the spirit of their chief and held themselves together, calm and

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collected. They forced their way slowly through the howling mob, disdainful of oaths, imprecations, and flying missiles, and lodged old John Brown in a place of safety. Never did Lee feel so thankful as when this had been accomplished, and never had the effect of discipline and good leadership been proved so clearly, for had one shot been fired by the much-harassed marine guard, there would have been great troubles to follow. The State of Virginia was so thoroughly upset that her preparations to resist invasion continued long after Brown was hanged, as he was at Charlestown, Virginia, on December 2d.

The prisoners that Lee took at Harper's Ferry were turned over to the United States district attorney, and Lee returned to Washington. Almost immediately afterwards he received orders to join his command, which was then in Texas, and here he remained until he received a summons to return to Washington, in February, 1861. It was a sad time indeed for him; the distressful vision that he had seen so many times before his eyes was working towards a reality. He saw plainly now that the bitterness of political feeling had grown to such an extent



ARRESTING JOHN BROWN AT HARPER'S FERRY



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between North and South that judgments were warped, passion had entered into speech and writings and action. Lee was torn between two feelings—his allegiance to his country and his allegiance to his native State.

His feelings are best shown in his own words, so we might well quote here a letter written to his son at just this time; about it there is nothing that is not hopeful, it has the ring of outspoken honesty, yet in not a line does he attempt to influence his son's political views; he leaves him to make his own decision, as his conscience might direct. And so he writes:

“As an American citizen I take pride in my country, her prosperity and her institutions, and would defend any State if her rights were invaded. But I can anticipate no greater calamity for my country than a dissolution of the Union. It would be an accumulation of all the evils we complain of, and I am willing to sacrifice everything but honor for its preservation. I hope, therefore, that all constitutional means will be exhausted before there is a resort to force. Secession is nothing but revolution. The

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framers of our Constitution never exhausted so much labor, wisdom, and forbearance in its formation, and surrounded it with so many guards and securities, if it was intended to be broken by every member of the Confederacy at will. . . . Still, a union that can only be maintained by swords and bayonets, and in which strife and civil war are to take the place of brotherly love and kindness, has no charm for me. I shall mourn for my country and for the welfare and progress of mankind. If the Union is dissolved and the government disrupted, I shall return to my native State and share the miseries of my people, and, save in defence, will draw my sword on none."

There was one man who was more anxious than all others to influence Lee's decision; that was his old commander, General Scott. He knew of Lee's close and heartfelt devotion to Virginia, the State that was also his own. He knew of Lee's love for his birthplace and his early home, his sense of allegiance to the commonwealth to whose early history his ancestors had contributed so much and in whose kindly

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soil they rested in their graves. But General Scott knew also, as no other man did, the value of that calm mind and ready brain, the courage of that bold heart, and the balance of that well-ordered intellect. Resourcefulness, experience, force, judgment, and decision, all were there, and that peculiar something also that all great military leaders have had in all past ages—the power of unconsciously impressing the weight of their character and determination upon others, and the magnetism that forces men to follow where they lead.

The old general, with the infirmities of his great age growing thick upon him, his ponderous, unwieldy body ailing from disease, and his mind embittered by his many personal quarrels (and, if the truth may be told, petty hatreds), yet saw clearly that to lose the services of Robert E. Lee would be to lose, as he expressed it to Mr. Lincoln, more than the services of fifty thousand men.

There were few people in the North, or outside of his own State of Virginia, who knew who was the colonel of the 2d Cavalry. They had read Lee's name in despatches, true enough, along

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with many others that they had forgotten, but the people at large would have been astonished if they had known that Mr. Lincoln, after a long interview with General Scott, had requested Mr. Francis Preston Blair to see Lee and persuade him, yes, to tempt him, to remain loyal, by the offer of the command of the Northern armies that it was soon expected would be put in the field. Never at the time did Lee mention this remarkable interview that was held in Washington, and it was not until three years after the war was over that it was made public. Mr. Blair used all the arguments that he could think of, and then frankly told the reason that he had sought the meeting, and offered Lee, in the name of the President of the United States, the highest military honor in the possession of the national government. Lee listened courteously to all of Mr. Blair's remarks, and the depth of his feeling plainly showed in his tone and in his words as he replied:

“My appreciation, sir, of the extreme honor that you might wish to confer upon me is great, my gratitude is humble; but I must state, candidly and openly, that I could not accept the

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command of any army to be put in the field for such purposes as will ultimately be necessary. I am opposed, most strongly, to secession, and I deprecate with all my soul any movement that would tend to war; but everything within me, my conscience, my belief, my sympathies, my affections, and my sense of right and justice as I see it, would prevent me from taking part in an invasion of the Southern States."

When Lee had finished, Mr. Blair for a long time remained silent; then he put one question:

"Will you go see General Scott?" he asked.

"Certainly," Lee replied. "I will go to him at once."

Immediately following this interview, Lee repaired to General Scott's office. He found the old warrior seated in an enormous arm-chair, a great mountain of ponderous flesh, with his gray, lion-like head sunk into the broad shoulders that had once been so erect and soldierly. Scott greeted Lee warmly, as he always had done. He motioned him to be seated near him, and during the talk that followed more than once the old general's dim eyes filled with tears, not of anger, but of sorrow; for he perceived that it

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would be impossible to alter Lee's decision. It was not those two almost insurmountable obstacles in character that he had to deal with, a strong will or a bitter prejudice, both of which may be overcome or broken down, but it was the firm, unswerving belief in the rectitude of his own judgment, the soulful conviction and self-approval of a spiritual mind.

Lee had made his own decision and met the trying ordeal before him with the heroic spirit of self-sacrifice. Scott parted from him, saddened and grieved, but yet with all his affections reaching out towards his friend whose friendship he never lost.

So, two days later, on the same day as Secretary of War Cameron received Lee's resignation, dated Arlington, April 20, 1861, General Scott received the following epistle:

“GENERAL,—Since my interview with you on the 18th instant I have felt that I ought no longer to retain my commission in the army. I therefore tender my resignation, which I request you will recommend for acceptance. It would have been presented at once but for the struggle it has

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cost me to separate myself from a service to which I have devoted the best years of my life and all the ability I possess. During the whole of that time, more than a quarter of a century, I have experienced nothing but kindness from my superiors and a most cordial friendship from my comrades. To no one general have I been as much indebted as to yourself for uniform kindness and consideration. It has always been my ardent desire to merit your approbation. I shall carry to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration, and your name and fame shall always be dear to me. Save in the defence of my native State, I never desire again to draw my sword. Be pleased to accept my most earnest wishes for the continuance of your happiness and prosperity, and believe me, most truly yours,

ROBERT E. LEE."

It must have been with thronging memories of the past, and bitter doubts and fears for the future, that Robert E. Lee signed his name. People who at that day, in the bitterness of their feelings, denounced as traitors those who (deciding to the best of their conscience, judgment,

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and ability) chose to remain true to their own States, when they forsook the national federation, must respect and admire Lee in the moment of his soul's trial and bitter anguish.

Immediately upon the secession of Virginia, Lee was summoned to Richmond, and was there tendered the position of major-general in command of the forces of the State, a title that he later relinquished for that of commander-in-chief of the armies of the Confederacy. The son of Light Horse Harry had made his judgment as he believed his father would have made it had he been alive, and over the old and well-fought battle-grounds where Henry Lee had led his ragged followers, resisting the invasion of the people from whom he had descended, and fighting also those of his own countrymen who, under the name of Tories, bore allegiance to the crown, Robert E. Lee was to march and fight against men of his own blood and faith, and the military fame of his great father was to dim in the lustre that the son was to gather to the name of Lee.

XVI

THROUGH MANY CAMPAIGNS

EIGHTEEN months of the great war had passed. The world was watching. The brothers, with their hands clutched at each other's throats in awful spectacle, were still strong to fight. Hatred and defiance yet flashed from their eyes. We can scarce believe it now, but the North and the South, it then appeared, could never, after their bloody embraces and fierce struggles, be reconciled. Battles that have been described over and over again had been fought and won and lost. Military reputations had been ruined and had been made. In thousands of graves that dotted the hill-sides and valleys of fair Virginia lay her sons and the invaders, side by side. The bloody tide had ebbed and flowed over twice and thrice fought fields, and through it all Robert E. Lee had proved himself a leader of men and a genius in warfare.

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From the first of the seven days' fighting around Richmond, when his badly equipped and almost untried army had stopped and thrown back the Union advance, blood was spilled every day. During the months of June, July, and August Lee had won victories. And it was now September. The drawn battle of Antietam had been fought, and Lee's advance into Maryland had been checked. With about thirty-five thousand men he had held his own against nearly seventy thousand Northern troops under McClellan, and though halted and compelled ultimately to fall back, in that short campaign he had captured fourteen thousand prisoners, over fifty much-needed guns, and large quantities of stores of various descriptions.

It would be impossible in this writing to go into the details of the military movements, or to discuss the whys and the wherefores of victory or defeat. Over the much-threshed questions volumes have been written, bitter controversies fought in print, reasons given and excuses made. We have but to take occasional glances as if through the eyes of other people, at Lee, to keep the interest and intention of this

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volume. How fared it with him? Was he changed or altered? Had his powers waned? One day, just after Antietam had been fought and the Confederate forces rested not far from the town of Winchester, there arrived there a young Englishman, a soldier who had already attracted attention to himself by his bravery in battle and his display of military knowledge. He had travelled long distances and had passed through many dangers in order to meet and talk with General Lee. The name of this young Englishman was Wolseley, and he has given such a picture of the great general that to quote it here in full might be the best way to present him to us as he must have then appeared.

After describing the difficulties by which he had at last reached Richmond and his journey out into the surrounding country, traversing many lately fought battle-fields, Lord Wolseley writes of his reaching Lee's army:

"As soon as I could do so," he goes on to say, "I proceeded to General Lee's headquarters, about six miles from the town on the road to Harper's Ferry. Every incident in that visit

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to him is indelibly stamped on my memory. I have taken no special trouble to remember all he said to me then and during subsequent conversations, and yet it is still fresh in my recollection. But it is natural it should be so, for he was the ablest general, and to me seemed the greatest man I ever conversed with; and yet I have had the privilege of meeting Von Moltke and Prince Bismarck, and at least upon one occasion had a very long and intensely interesting conversation with the latter. General Lee was one of the few men who ever seriously impressed and awed me with their natural, their inherent greatness. Forty years have come and gone since our meeting, yet the majesty of his manly bearing, the genial, winning grace, the sweetness of his smile, and the impressive dignity of his old-fashioned style of address come back to me among the most cherished of my recollections. His greatness made me humble, and I never felt my own individual insignificance more keenly than I did in his presence. He was then about fifty years of age, with hair and beard nearly white. Tall, extremely handsome, and strongly built, very soldier-like in bearing, he

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looked a thoroughbred gentleman. Care had, however, already wrinkled his brow, and there came at moments a look of sadness into his clear, honest, and speaking dark-brown eyes that indicated how much his overwhelming national responsibility had already told upon him. As he listened to you attentively, he seemed to look into your heart and to search your brain. He spoke of the future with confidence, though one could clearly see he was of no very sanguine temperament. He deplored the bitterness introduced into the struggle, but there was no rancor in his tone when he referred to the Northern government. He had merely 'gone with his State'—Virginia—the pervading principle that had influenced most of the soldiers I spoke with during my visit to the South. His was indeed a beautiful character, and of him it might truthfully be written: 'In righteousness he did judge and make war.'"

Such is the opinion of a man who described himself as an outsider, and yet who recalls his impressions as being so strong that they amount to perhaps the strongest of his life. How much

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more must Lee's character have influenced and dominated those with whom he was thrown into every-day contact. Perhaps it may be said of him that, like Washington, the greatness of his moral character almost cast into shade the renown of his military genius; it certainly preserved him from personal ambition, and made him as great in defeat as in victory. But we must press on, for this part of the story cannot be regarded as a history of his campaigns or a review of the doings of his army; there is hardly space to hint of them. Yet victory after victory he won over superior forces, making sport of difficulties, triumphing over privations. And at last, with a fierce determination that might have marked a man in desperation (though that was not the case), pressing on northward towards the tempting land of plenty, fighting his way, mile after mile. The news of his coming spread before him, and called forth from the inexhaustible North its greatest effort to repel him. And so his great wave of invasion broke upon the hills of Pennsylvania and dwindled and receded from the Confederate high-tide at Gettysburg. His great effort failed. Let historians tell the rea-

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son why. Let them invoke the records of both armies to prove what happened or what might have happened. Let them excuse or defend this one or that. Let them write what they will of the great Virginian, and we will find a grand and heroic figure of a simple man, admired by his enemies and uncensured by his loving followers. There will be left a leader who had naught to say in explanation of his actions, and who took the burden of all responsibility, unflinchingly, upon himself. What reasonable excuse for failure there might have been in relating the delinquencies of his subordinates, he did not indulge in. But his brave spirit was not destroyed nor his bold heart daunted. The masterly retreat that he began on July 4th, and continued for a week, showed his military genius as plainly as his well-planned advance had done.

Month after month was passed in constant fighting, and in May of 1864 Lee found arrayed against him and his veteran army such forces that a man of lesser powers might have become unnerved from the mere pressure of his surroundings. And he was fighting a great general now, for Ulysses S. Grant had assumed command of

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the Army of the Potomac. There followed the battle of the Wilderness, and then the bloody fighting around Spottsylvania Court-House. And just here a little incident of the two days' fight in the tangled thickets:

On the morning of May 6th, on the second day's fighting, it was going hard with the Confederate forces on the right. Hancock had almost driven General A. P. Hill from his position the evening before, and early in the morning he renewed the assault. Hill was wavering when General Longstreet's forces appeared—an hour's delay and they would have arrived too late. Lee, who had been chafing because of the slowness with which some of the brigades were moving, had grown impatient. The thundering volleys of the Union infantry, as they approached, warned him that unless they were quickly checked, the day was lost, and it was at this moment that Gregg's Texas brigade came hurrying up. The old spirit that had animated the general when he was a younger officer in Mexico thrilled him through and through.

"Come, my brave boys, charge, charge!" he cried, riding out to the head of the column.

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The men looked up and saw who it was. They began to shout to him—first one, bolder than the rest, and then another, until there was a chorus of voices rising all about.

“Go back, general! Go back, General Lee, go back!” They motioned to him with their arms. Lee still pressed on, when suddenly a sergeant, jumping forward, caught his horse’s bridle.

“We won’t go in till you go back, sir!” he cried. “For God’s sake, don’t stay here; we can’t lose you!”

The man clung to the horse’s bridle as he spoke, and Lee gave in.

“My Texas boys, you must charge!” he cried.

And with a cheer the men answered him, plunging at top speed through bushes and timber towards where the Northern volleys were rippling the loudest.

“It was a terrible field for battle—a region of tangled underbrush, ragged foliage, and knotted trunks. You hear the saturnalia, gloomy, hideous, desperate, raging unconfined. You see nothing, and the very mystery augments the horror. Nothing is visible, and from out the depths comes the ruin that has been wrought in bleeding

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shapes, borne on blankets or on stretchers." Thus wrote an eye-witness in a vivid picture of the day. In one way the Wilderness was the most awful fight of the war, if not of all history. Charges were made and repulsed at point-blank range, and yet men could not see one another. Over the tangle of the thick wood hung for two days a pall of smoke. Wounded, hidden in clefts among the great bowlders, could not be found. Dying men crawled away and hid themselves like wounded beasts, the woods caught fire and hundreds of the helpless perished in the flames. After it was over Grant made a dash to get between Lee's army and Richmond, and Lee, by a hurried movement, checked him near Spottsylvania.

In the battle of the Wilderness General Grant lost nearly eighteen thousand men; Lee lost about nine thousand. Again at Spottsylvania was the bloody tragedy to be re-enacted, when the Union loss was great. There followed the many actions that terminated at Cold Harbor and Petersburg, and there Lee stood at the gate of the capital, where for ten long, weary months he was to remain unmoved upon the defensive.

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While he was there came his tardy appointment as commander-in-chief of the Confederate army, in February, 1865.

After the great attempt at blowing up the Confederate lines by mining, and the bloody battle of the Crater, the operations became reduced to merely advancing of intrenchments. The Union hold was becoming stronger and stronger, and the pressure greater. Lee's flank was turned at last, his rear was threatened, and on April 2d Petersburg was left to the Northern armies and Lee retreated. Then followed the sorrowful news that crushed upon every Southern heart—the news that Richmond had fallen on April 3d.

Lee had long felt that the struggle for the protection of Richmond was utterly hopeless. He might have retreated with his army to the valley, and in the bitterness of his feeling protracted a dreary and useless struggle that would have been costly to his enemies, but he was too great for that. The desire for revenge never dwelt in his heart, but he did not give up until he had made one more legitimate attempt to turn the tide. As a Southern writer has so picturesquely put it:

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“Was not the right man in his place amid those wintry, shelterless trenches around Petersburg, as commander of those ragged, frozen, starved, but unconquered troops, who held their thirty-five or forty miles of defences with a thousand men a mile? What other American, save Washington, would have been the right man there? And how can any man or woman who loves courage and genius and unselfishness and gentleness and implicit trust in God, not love Lee, whatever may be thought of the losing cause he served. Who among us does not envy the opportunity of that Richmond lady to show her love, who made him drink the last cup of tea she had, and complacently sipped the muddy water of the James River that he might not detect her sacrifice and refuse to accept her homage?”

And as they read of him, may not the people of the North feel proud that their country has produced a man like Lee? May they not share in the feeling of admiration that is akin to the Southerner's reverence for his memory? And so we come to the last chapter of his martial life—the end that crowned.

XVII

THE END THAT CROWNED

WHEN, on April 2d, the stubbornly held Confederate line, that had been maintained by half-starved men so long and so bravely, was broken, and Lee sent word back to Richmond that he was about to evacuate, there was one hope left. Great quantities of supplies had been gathered by a supreme effort of the Confederate commissary department, and these he ordered to be sent on to his famished army at Amelia Court-House, but through some delay or mistake the orders were never delivered and the supplies never came. The bitter disappointment can well be imagined. A provision-train, loaded with precious supplies, passed through Amelia and was unloaded at Richmond, a fair present to the enemy. General Grant was on the march with his forces in fine shape and men in fine spirits, and slowly encircling the

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Confederate army that had not the physical strength to make a long retreat. The principal rations of the men for weeks had been parched corn, and little enough of that; yet, as history shows, they were full of fight, although with a sad heart their commander felt the uselessness of calling upon them for a sustained effort.

A reconnoissance in force showed that a battle would have but one result; the idea of a "forlorn hope" and a last desperate stand was abandoned. On April 7th came the well-known note from Grant addressed to Lee, brought through the lines by General Seth Williams, Grant's adjutant-general, who had been Lee's adjutant when he was superintendent at West Point, and a very dear and intimate friend of the Confederate commander-in-chief. The letter was first received by Colonel Humphreys, who had repulsed the Union attack in the morning and who occupied the outposts, and by him was sent on at once to Lee, who received it about nine o'clock in the evening. It read as follows:

"GENERAL,—The result of the last week must convince you of the hopelessness of further

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resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia in this struggle. I feel that it is so, and regard it as my duty to shift from myself the responsibility of any further effusion of blood by asking of you the surrender of that portion of the Confederate States army known as the Army of Northern Virginia.

“U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

“*General R. E. Lee.*”

Before midnight Lee's reply had been written, despatched, and received by General Grant. In this note he reciprocated the Northern commander's desire to avoid further bloodshed, and asked the terms upon which he might consider the surrender of his army of twenty-five thousand men. The gist of Grant's reply was that men and officers should be disqualified from taking up arms against the United States until properly exchanged. Before an answer to this communication could be sent the Union forces were moving. General Meade was marching on the north of the Appomattox River and Sheridan was south of it. They reached the railway and there captured a Confederate hospital train, twen-

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ty-five cannon, and four train-loads of supplies. These were absolutely Lee's last resources. On the 8th Grant received the following note from Lee:

“GENERAL,—I received, at a late hour, your note of to-day. In mine of yesterday I did not intend to propose the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, but to ask the terms of your proposition. To be frank, I do not think the emergency has arisen to call for the surrender of this army, but as the restoration of peace should be the sole object of all, I desire to know whether your proposal would lead to that end. I cannot, therefore, meet you with a view to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia, but as far as your proposal may affect the Confederate States forces under my command, and tend to the restoration of peace, I should be pleased to meet you at 10 A.M. to-morrow on the old stage-road to Richmond, between the picket-lines of the two armies. R. E. LEE, General.

“*Lieutenant-General U. S. Grant.*”

No armistice had been declared, and on the morning of the 9th a desperate attempt was

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made to break the lines of Sheridan's cavalry at Appomattox, but the arrival of the Union General Ord's command, the 5th Corps, turned it back. It was then that the white flag was sent to the Union lines with a request that hostilities should be suspended pending negotiations for a general surrender. Lee's note asking for an interview was received about the same time. The request was granted, and in the house of Mr. Wilmer McLean, at Appomattox, the meeting took place.

Lee's feelings, as he rode along on his iron-gray horse, Traveller, can well be imagined. It was not so much the bitterness of the task that racked him as the doubtfulness of the future. What should be done with the brave men who had followed him for so many weary years? What would become of the land he loved so well, now devastated and racked by the ruin and desolation of war? There was no evidence of a break-down of his grand spirit, no token of the grief that he felt because his pride must suffer; clad in his uniform of a major-general, that fitted his graceful figure to perfection, with spotless white gauntlets, and his presentation sword by

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his side, Lee made a noble, soldierly appearance. He was accompanied only by Colonel Charles Marshall, of his staff. Grant met him as soon as he had dismounted at the doorway to the house. The two shook hands. There was a great contrast in their looks, the Union general, short and thick-set, with his stubby brown beard, was attired in an old undress uniform blouse, the only marks of his rank being his general's shoulder-straps; his worn trousers were thrust into campaign-boots and his coat was unbuttoned. He glanced at the gray-bearded, handsome man before him in his trim uniform, with the three golden stars on the turn-down collar. Perhaps, in his mind's eye, there came to him a little scene so many years before in the city of Mexico, when Lee had spoken to him, almost in a reprimand, about his lack of neatness in appearance. Lee was in no position now to complain, but General Grant's first words, in their courtesy and kindness, could not have been better chosen, especially if Lee's thoughts had reverted to the self-same scene.

"General," he said, "I must apologize for not having on a different uniform and not wearing

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my sword. I have been separated for three days from my baggage, which is, perhaps, a sufficient explanation."

With that he turned and introduced the members of his staff, and as they entered the room he began to talk about old times when they had served under General Scott. Nothing could better illustrate the "simplicity of greatness" than the meeting between these two great men. At last they came to the momentous business before them, and they approached it with all the honesty of men whose purpose was clear, whose duty was apparent, and who had no time to waste in exactions, demands, or misunderstandings. General Grant sat down at the little marble-top table, and, without hesitation, wrote the following letter, wonderful in its terseness, and yet remarkable in its all-embracing comprehension. It read as follows:

"APPOMATTOX C. H., VIRGINIA, *April 9, 1865.*
"*General R. E. Lee, Commanding Confederate States Armies :*

GENERAL,—In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th inst., I propose to

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receive the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the following terms—to wit: Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate, one copy to be given to an officer designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer as you may designate. The officers to give their individual parole not to take arms against the United States until properly exchanged, and each company or regimental commander to sign a like parole for the men of their command. The arms, artillery, and public property to be parked and stacked and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers nor their private horses or baggage. This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their parole and the laws in force where they may reside.

“U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.”

Lee read the letter carefully but quickly.

“Many of my artillerists and cavalrymen own their own horses, general,” he said. “May I ask

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if the provision concerning the officers' horses will apply to them?"

"No," replied Grant, "it will not, as it is written; but as I think this will be the last battle of the war, and as I suppose most of the men in the ranks are small farmers, who without these horses would find it difficult to put in their crops, the country having been swept of everything movable, and as the United States does not want them, I will instruct the officers who are to receive the paroles of your troops to let every man who claims to own a horse or mule take the animal to his home."

Lee bowed.

"It will have a happy effect, general," he said, a tone of relief in his voice, and then, sitting down, he wrote out his formal letter of acceptance of the conditions. He had no paper on which to write, and turning to his aide, Colonel Marshall, he asked him for some. The latter had none either, and turned to Colonel Ely S. Parker, one of Grant's staff, who was a full-blooded Iroquois chief. He could only give him some note-paper, as all the other paper that he had was officially headed. Lee took this and,

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thanking Colonel Parker, sat down to write. His note was short, and was nothing more than an acknowledgment of General Grant's letter and acceptance of the terms, and an expression of his intention to designate the proper officers to carry out the stipulations.

Once more the generals shook hands and Lee courteously bade a good-morning to the members of Grant's staff. There was no element of the dramatic in any part of the proceedings, and yet the picture of the moment lingered for all time in the minds of those who witnessed it, and has been embodied in a painting that has handed down the scene to posterity. It is the very absence of all glitter and panoply and circumstance that makes the picture the stronger. No tragic bemoaning of the past, no dramatic offer of the sword-hilt on the bended knee, no humbled leader or vainglorious conqueror, only two great men, as we have said before, simple and direct in their conduct under the weight of a vast responsibility, and each looking forward, with mutual hope and mutual desire, to the building of the future in which their followers

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should forget all enmities, and, hand-in-hand, labor in the building.

Before Lee departed he turned to General Grant, his dark eyes searching the latter's face.

"I have a thousand and more of your officers and men with me, whom we have required to march along with us for several days," he said. "I shall be glad to send them to your lines as soon as it can be arranged, for I have no provisions for them. My own men have been living for the last few days principally upon parched corn, and we are badly in need of both rations and forage."

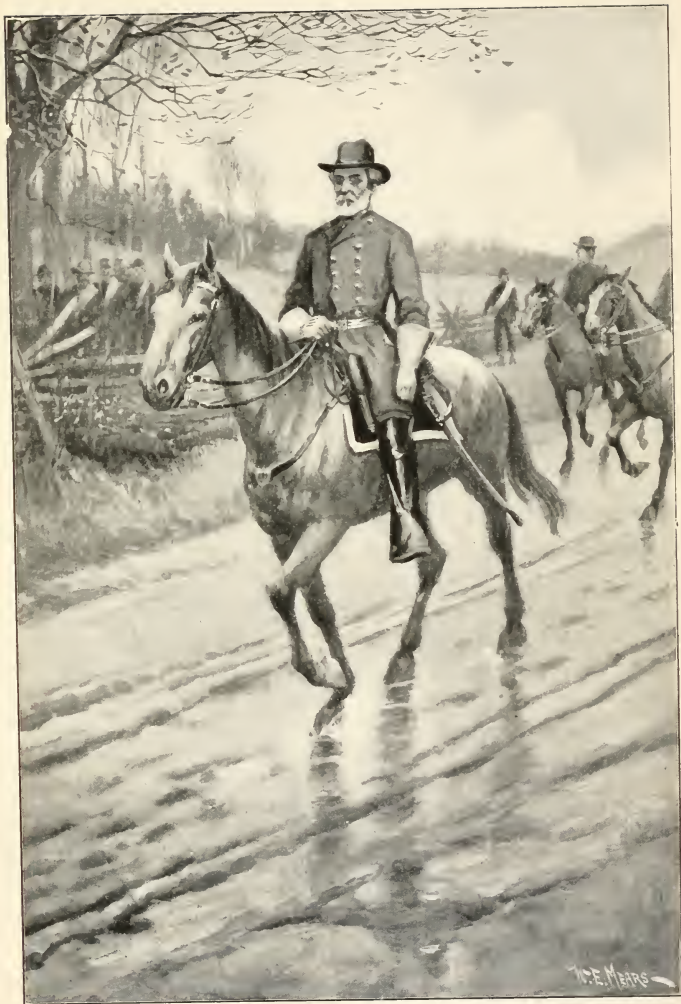
Grant immediately suggested that he should send Lee twenty-five thousand rations, and Lee thanked him, assuring him it would be a great relief.

About three o'clock the Confederate commander left and rode slowly towards his own lines. But his shoulders were unbowed and his head erect, although his face showed the great sorrow that filled his bosom. His nephew has thus described the scene when Lee was once more with his men:

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“The troops crowded around him, eagerly desiring to shake his hand. They had seen him when his eye calmly surveyed miles of fierce, raging conflict; had closely observed him when, tranquil, composed, undisturbed, he had heard the wild shout of victory rend the air; now they saw their beloved chieftain a prisoner of war, and sympathy, boundless admiration and love for him filled their brave hearts. They pressed up to him, anxious to touch his person or even his horse, and copious tears washed from strong men’s cheeks the stains of powder. Slowly and painfully he turned to his soldiers, and, with voice quivering with emotion, said, ‘Men, we have fought through the war together; I have done my best for you; my heart is too full to say more.’”

It was hard to make these grizzled veterans believe that it was all over, that the end had come to the fighting and marching. To thousands and thousands, of course, it was a great relief, but many could not reconcile themselves to the new situation. It was long months before they could force themselves to accept the



LEE RETURNING FROM SURRENDER AT APPOMATTOX

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idea that the cause for which they had given so much (those who viewed their ruined country can understand) had failed.

The army disbanded. Lee returned to Richmond and there joined his family. On May 29th President Johnson, from Washington, proclaimed his policy of reconciliation, and in it Lee heartily agreed. On June 13th he wrote and requested to be embraced within its provisions, and tendered his allegiance to the only government in existence under whose flag he must resume the duties of citizenship. Lee was a private citizen now, for the first time since he had arrived at man's estate. For forty years he had been a soldier, but now he turned to ways of peace. He declined all offers of gifts and lucrative employment that were made to him, but accepted the position that he held till the day of his death—the presidency of Washington College, at Lexington, to which he was elected in August, 1865; and to his career as president the graduates of that university point with pride. But his health, that had been shaken from exposure during the trying campaigns, began to wane. He made one trip to the South.

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to Georgia, in the spring of 1870, in the hope that the rest and change of scene would do him good, and on that trip he visited Cumberland Island with his daughter Agnes, to lay a wreath there on the grave of his father, "Light Horse Harry." It was a touching scene. In a letter he described how the fresh flowers had been placed on the grave, and he added, "I presume it is the last time I shall be able to pay it my tribute of respect."

At first it seemed that the little vacation had done him good, but slowly his disease began to grow again and he showed evidence of increasing feebleness. One day, late in September, 1870, he stood at the head of his table while his family, with bowed heads, waited to hear him pronounce the well-known grace, but no words came. Feebly he sat down. It was the summons of his approaching end. For almost two weeks he lingered, growing weaker and weaker, until, on the morning of October 12, 1870, Robert Edward Lee passed away in the fulness of his greatness, surrounded by the love of a people, to the great and bitter sorrow of a loving family, and surely in his life challenging the admiration of all men,

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for certainly no purer life, no more unselfish personality, no more chivalrous gentleman ever lived, nor one better fitted to bear the honored inheritance of an honored name. Let the example of his life stand before the eyes of his united countrymen; may men of the North and South and East and West point to it with equal pride, and may their sons profit by its teaching.

THE END





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